

PD GREECE AND ITALY

Anthology compiled by Matt Pierard

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PLATO

From Project Gutenberg's *A Short History of Greek Philosophy*, by John Marshall

Student and wanderer--The Dialogues--Immortal longings--Art is love--Knowledge through remembrance--Platonic love

This great master, the Shakespeare of Greek philosophy, as one may call him, for his fertility, his variety, his humour, his imagination, his poetic grace, was born at Athens in the year 429 B.C. He was of noble family, numbering among his ancestors no less a man than the great lawgiver Solon, and tracing back his descent even further to the [pg.240] legendary Codrus, last king of Athens. At a very early age he seems to have begun to study the philosophers, Heraclitus more particularly, and

before he was twenty he had written a tragedy. About that time, however, he met Socrates; and at once giving up all thought of poetic fame he burnt his poem, and devoted himself to the hearing of Socrates. For ten years he was his constant companion. When Socrates met his death in 399, Plato and other followers of the master fled at first to Megara, as already mentioned (above, p. 132); he then entered on a period of extended travel, first to Cyrene and {135} Egypt, thence to Italy and Sicily. In Italy he devoted himself specially to a study of the doctrine of Pythagoras. It is said that at Syracuse he offended the tyrant Dionysius the elder by his freedom of speech, and was delivered up to the Spartans, who were then at war with Athens. [241] Ultimately he was ransomed, and found his way back to Athens, but he is said to have paid a second visit to Sicily when the younger Dionysius became tyrant. He seems to have entertained the hope that he might so influence this young man as to be able to realise through him the dream of his life, a government in accordance with the dictates of [242] philosophy. His dream, however, was disappointed of fruition, and he returned to Athens, there in the 'groves of Academus' a mythic hero of Athens, to spend the rest of his days in converse with his followers, and there at the ripe age of eighty-one he died. From the scene of his labours his philosophy has ever since been known as the Academic [243] philosophy. Unlike Socrates, he was not content to leave only a memory of himself and his conversations. He was unwearied in the redaction and correction of his written dialogues, altering them here and there both in expression and in structure. It is impossible, therefore, to be absolutely certain as to the historical order of composition or publication among his numerous {136} dialogues, but a certain approximate order may be fixed.

We may take first a certain number of comparatively short dialogues, which are strongly Socratic in the following respects: *_first_*, they each seek a definition of some particular virtue or quality; *_second_*, each suggests some relation between it and knowledge; *_third_*, each leaves the answer somewhat open, treating the matter suggestively rather than dogmatically. These dialogues are *_Charmides_*, which treats of Temperance (*_mens sana in corpore sano_*); *_Lysis_*, which treats of Friendship; *_Laches_*, Of Courage; *_Ion_*, Of Poetic Inspiration; *_Meno_*, Of the teachableness of Virtue; *_Euthyphro_*, Of Piety.

The last of these may be regarded as marking a transition to a second series, which are concerned with the trial and death of Socrates. The *Euthyphro* opens with an allusion by Socrates to his approaching trial, and in the *Apology* we have a Platonic version of Socrates' speech in his own defence; in *Crito* we have the story of his noble self-abnegation and civic obedience after his condemnation; in *Phaedo* we have his last conversation with his friends on the subject of Immortality, and the story of his death.

Another series of the dialogues may be formed of those, more or less satirical, in which the ideas and methods of the Sophists are criticised: *Protagoras*, {137} in which Socrates suggests that all virtues are essentially one; *Euthydemus*, in which the assumption and 'airs' of some of the Sophists are made fun of; *Cratylus*, Of the sophistic use of words; *Gorgias*, Of the True and the False, the truly Good and the truly Evil; *Hippias*, Of Voluntary and Involuntary Sin; *Alcibiades*, Of Self-Knowledge; *Menexenus*, a (possibly ironical) set oration after the manner of the Sophists, in praise of Athens.

The whole of this third series are characterised by humour, dramatic interest, variety of personal type among the speakers, keenness rather than depth of philosophic insight. There are many suggestions of profounder thoughts, afterwards worked out more fully; but on the whole these dialogues rather stimulate thought than satisfy it; the great poet-thinker is still playing with his tools.

A higher stage is reached in the *Symposium*, which deals at once humorously and profoundly with the subject of Love, human and divine, and its relations to Art and Philosophy, the whole consummated in a speech related by Socrates as having been spoken to him by Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea. From this speech an extract as translated by Professor Jowett may be quoted here. It marks the transition point from the merely playful and critical to the relatively serious and dogmatic stage in the mind of Plato:--

{138} "Marvel not," she said, "if you believe that love is of the immortal, as we have already several times acknowledged; for here again, and on the same principle too, the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a

new existence in the place of the old. Nay even in the life of the same individual there is succession and not absolute unity: a man is called the same, and yet in the short interval which elapses between youth and age, and in which every animal is said to have life and identity, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation--hair, flesh, bones, blood, and the whole body are always changing. Which is true not only of the body, but also of the soul, whose habits, tempers, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, never remain the same in any one of us, but are always coming and going; and equally true of knowledge, which is still more surprising--for not only do the sciences in general come and go, so that in respect of them we are never the same; but each of them individually experiences a like change. For what is implied in the word 'recollection,' but the departure of knowledge, which is ever being forgotten and is renewed and preserved by recollection, and appears to be the same although in reality new, according to that law of succession by which all mortal things are preserved, not absolutely the same, but by substitution, the old worn-out mortality leaving another new and similar existence behind--unlike the divine, which is always the same and not another? And in this way, Socrates, the mortal body, or mortal anything, partakes of immortality; but the immortal in another way. Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality."

I was astonished at her words, and said: "Is this really true, O thou wise Diotima?" And she answered with all the authority of a sophist: "Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;--think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to run risks greater far than they would have run for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of { 139 } toil, and even to die for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal. Do you imagine that Alcestis would have died to save Admetus, or Achilles to avenge Patroclus, or your own Codrus in order to preserve the kingdom for his sons, if they had not imagined that the memory of their virtues, which is still retained among us, would be immortal? Nay," she said, "I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue; for they desire the immortal."

"They whose bodies only are creative, betake themselves to women and beget children--this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and give them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But creative souls--for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies--conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or retain. And what are these conceptions?--wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. He wanders about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring--for in deformity he will beget nothing--and naturally embraces the beautiful rather than the deformed body; above all when he finds a fair and noble and well-nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person, and to such an one he is full of speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits of a good man; and he tries to educate him; and at the touch of the beautiful which is ever present to his memory, even when absent, he brings forth that which he had conceived long before, and in company with him tends that which he brings forth; and they are married by a far nearer tie and have a closer friendship than those who beget mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are fairer and more immortal. Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, { 140 } would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory? Or who would not have such children as Lycurgus left behind him to be the saviours, not only of Lacedaemon, but of Hellas, as one may say? There is Solon, too, who is the revered father of Athenian laws; and many others there are in many other places, both among Hellenes and barbarians. All of them have given to the world many noble works, and have been the parents of virtue of every kind, and many temples have been raised in their honour for the sake of their children; which were never raised in honour of any one, for the sake of his mortal children.

"These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates,

may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only--out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or { 141 } institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed; please to give me your very best attention.

"He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)--a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning, in the next place not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech

or knowledge, or existing in any other being; as for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place, but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates," said the stranger of Mantinea, "is that life above all others which a man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing only and conversing with them without meat or drink, { 142 } if that were possible--you only want to be with them and to look at them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty--the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality, and all the colours and vanities of human life--thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty divine and simple? Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?" (Jowett, *Plato*, vol. ii. p. 58).

Closely connected in subject with the *Symposium* is the *Phaedrus*. As Professor Jowett observes: "The two dialogues together contain the whole philosophy of Plato on the nature of love, which in *The Republic* and in the later writings of Plato is only introduced playfully or as a figure of speech. But in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* love and philosophy join hands, and one is an aspect of the other. The spiritual and emotional is elevated into the ideal, to which in the *Symposium* mankind are described as looking forward, and

which in the _Phaedrus_, as well as in the _Phaedo_, they are seeking to recover from a former state of existence."

We are here introduced to one of the most famous conceptions of Plato, that of _Reminiscence_, or Recollection, based upon a theory of the prior existence of the soul. In the _Meno_, already alluded to, Socrates is representing as eliciting from one of Meno's slaves {143} correct answers to questions involving a knowledge or apprehension of certain axioms of the science of mathematics, which, as Socrates learns, the slave had never been taught. Socrates argues that since he was never taught these axioms, and yet actually knows them, he must have known them before his birth, and concludes from this to the immortality of the soul. In the _Phaedo_ this same argument is worked out more fully. As we grow up we discover in the exercise of our senses that things are equal in certain respects, unequal in many others; or again, we appropriate to things or acts the qualities, for example, of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness. At the same time we recognise that these are _ideals_, to which in actual experience we never find more than an approximation, for we never discover in any really existing thing or act _absolute_ equality, or justice, or goodness. In other words, any act of judgment on our part of actual experiences consists in a measuring of these experiences by standards which we give or apply to them, and which no number of experiences can give to us because they do not possess or exemplify them. We did not consciously possess these notions, or ideals, or _ideas_, as he prefers to call them, at birth; they come into consciousness in connection with or in consequence of the action of the senses; but since the senses could not give these ideas, the process of {144} knowledge must be a process of _Recollection_. Socrates carries the argument a step further. "Then may we not say," he continues, "that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty and goodness and other similar ideas or essences, and to this standard, which is now discovered to have existed in our former state, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them--assuming these ideas to have a prior existence, then our souls must have had a prior existence, but if not, not? There is the same proof that these ideas must have existed before we were born, as that our souls existed before we were born; and if not the ideas, then not the souls."

In the _Phaedrus_ this conception of a former existence is embodied in

one of the _Myths_ in which Plato's imaginative powers are seen at their highest. In it the soul is compared to a charioteer driving two winged steeds, one mortal, the other immortal; the one ever tending towards the earth, the other seeking ever to soar into the sky, where it may behold those blessed visions of loveliness and wisdom and goodness, which are the true nurture of the soul. When the chariots of the gods go forth in mighty and glorious procession, the soul would fain ride forth in their train; but alas! the mortal steed is ever hampering the immortal, and dragging it down.

If the soul yields to this influence and descends to earth, there she takes human form, but in higher {145} or lower degree, according to the measure of her vision of the truth. She may become a philosopher, a king, a trader, an athlete, a prophet, a poet, a husbandman, a sophist, a tyrant. But whatever her lot, according to her manner of life in it, may she rise, or sink still further, even to a beast or plant.

Only those souls take the form of humanity that have had _some_ vision of eternal truth. And this vision they retain in a measure, even when clogged in mortal clay. And so the soul of man is ever striving and fluttering after something beyond; and specially is she stirred to aspiration by the sight of bodily loveliness. Then above all comes the test of good and evil in the soul. The nature that has been corrupted would fain rush to brutal joys; but the purer nature looks with reverence and wonder at this beauty, for it is an adumbration of the celestial joys which he still remembers vaguely from the heavenly vision. And thus pure and holy love becomes an opening back to heaven; it is a source of happiness unalloyed on earth; it guides the lovers on upward wings back to the heaven whence they came.



LYSIS, OR FRIENDSHIP

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Lysis*, by Plato

Translator: Benjamin Jowett

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

Socrates, who is the narrator, Menexenus, Hippothales, Lysis, Ctesippus.

SCENE: A newly-erected Palaestra outside the walls of Athens.

I was going from the Academy straight to the Lyceum, intending to take the outer road, which is close under the wall. When I came to the postern gate of the city, which is by the fountain of Panops, I fell in with Hippothales, the son of Hieronymus, and Ctesippus the Paeanian, and a company of young men who were standing with them. Hippothales, seeing me approach, asked whence I came and whither I was going.

I am going, I replied, from the Academy straight to the Lyceum.

Then come straight to us, he said, and put in here; you may as well.

Who are you, I said; and where am I to come?

He showed me an enclosed space and an open door over against the wall. And there, he said, is the building at which we all meet: and a goodly company we are.

And what is this building, I asked; and what sort of entertainment have you?

The building, he replied, is a newly erected Palaestra; and the entertainment is generally conversation, to which you are welcome.

Thank you, I said; and is there any teacher there?

Yes, he said, your old friend and admirer, Miccus.

Indeed, I replied; he is a very eminent professor.

Are you disposed, he said, to go with me and see them?

Yes, I said; but I should like to know first, what is expected of me, and who is the favourite among you?

Some persons have one favourite, Socrates, and some another, he said.

And who is yours? I asked: tell me that, Hippothales.

At this he blushed; and I said to him, O Hippothales, thou son of Hieronymus! do not say that you are, or that you are not, in love; the confession is too late; for I see that you are not only in love, but are already far gone in your love. Simple and foolish as I am, the Gods have given me the power of understanding affections of this kind.

Whereupon he blushed more and more.

Ctesippus said: I like to see you blushing, Hippothales, and hesitating to tell Socrates the name; when, if he were with you but for a very short time, you would have plagued him to death by talking about nothing else. Indeed, Socrates, he has literally deafened us, and stopped our ears with the praises of Lysis; and if he is a little intoxicated, there is every likelihood that we may have our sleep murdered with a cry of Lysis. His performances in prose are bad enough, but nothing at all in comparison with his verse; and when he drenches us with his poems and other compositions, it is really too bad; and worse still is his manner of singing them to his love; he has a voice which is truly appalling, and we cannot help hearing him: and now having a question put to him by you, behold he is blushing.

Who is Lysis? I said: I suppose that he must be young; for the name does not recall any one to me.

Why, he said, his father being a very well-known man, he retains his patronymic, and is not as yet commonly called by his own name; but, although you do not know his name, I am sure that you must know his face, for that is quite enough to distinguish him.

But tell me whose son he is, I said.

He is the eldest son of Democrates, of the deme of Aexone.

Ah, Hippothales, I said; what a noble and really perfect love you have found! I wish that you would favour me with the exhibition which you have been making to the rest of the company, and then I shall be able to judge whether you know what a lover ought to say about his love, either to the youth himself, or to others.

Nay, Socrates, he said; you surely do not attach any importance to what he is saying.

Do you mean, I said, that you disown the love of the person whom he says that you love?

No; but I deny that I make verses or address compositions to him.

He is not in his right mind, said Ctesippus; he is talking nonsense, and is stark mad.

O Hippothales, I said, if you have ever made any verses or songs in honour of your favourite, I do not want to hear them; but I want to know the purport of them, that I may be able to judge of your mode of approaching your fair one.

Ctesippus will be able to tell you, he said; for if, as he avers, the sound of my words is always dinning in his ears, he must have a very accurate knowledge and recollection of them.

Yes, indeed, said Ctesippus; I know only too well; and very ridiculous the tale is: for although he is a lover, and very devotedly in love, he has nothing particular to talk about to his beloved which a child might not say. Now is not that ridiculous? He can only speak of the wealth of Democrates, which the whole city celebrates, and grandfather Lysis, and the other ancestors of the youth, and their stud of horses, and their victory at the Pythian games, and at the Isthmus, and at Nemea with four horses and single horses--these are the tales which he composes and repeats. And there is greater twaddle still. Only the day before

yesterday he made a poem in which he described the entertainment of Heracles, who was a connexion of the family, setting forth how in virtue of this relationship he was hospitably received by an ancestor of Lysis; this ancestor was himself begotten of Zeus by the daughter of the founder of the deme. And these are the sort of old wives' tales which he sings and recites to us, and we are obliged to listen to him.

When I heard this, I said: O ridiculous Hippothales! how can you be making and singing hymns in honour of yourself before you have won?

But my songs and verses, he said, are not in honour of myself, Socrates.

You think not? I said.

Nay, but what do you think? he replied.

Most assuredly, I said, those songs are all in your own honour; for if you win your beautiful love, your discourses and songs will be a glory to you, and may be truly regarded as hymns of praise composed in honour of you who have conquered and won such a love; but if he slips away from you, the more you have praised him, the more ridiculous you will look at having lost this fairest and best of blessings; and therefore the wise lover does not praise his beloved until he has won him, because he is afraid of accidents. There is also another danger; the fair, when any one praises or magnifies them, are filled with the spirit of pride and vain-glory. Do you not agree with me?

Yes, he said.

And the more vain-glorious they are, the more difficult is the capture of them?

I believe you.

What should you say of a hunter who frightened away his prey, and made the capture of the animals which he is hunting more difficult?

He would be a bad hunter, undoubtedly.

Yes; and if, instead of soothing them, he were to infuriate them with

words and songs, that would show a great want of wit: do you not agree.

Yes.

And now reflect, Hippothales, and see whether you are not guilty of all these errors in writing poetry. For I can hardly suppose that you will affirm a man to be a good poet who injures himself by his poetry.

Assuredly not, he said; such a poet would be a fool. And this is the reason why I take you into my counsels, Socrates, and I shall be glad of any further advice which you may have to offer. Will you tell me by what words or actions I may become endeared to my love?

That is not easy to determine, I said; but if you will bring your love to me, and will let me talk with him, I may perhaps be able to show you how to converse with him, instead of singing and reciting in the fashion of which you are accused.

There will be no difficulty in bringing him, he replied; if you will only go with Ctesippus into the Palaestra, and sit down and talk, I believe that he will come of his own accord; for he is fond of listening, Socrates. And as this is the festival of the Hermaea, the young men and boys are all together, and there is no separation between them. He will be sure to come: but if he does not, Ctesippus with whom he is familiar, and whose relation Menexenus is his great friend, shall call him.

That will be the way, I said. Thereupon I led Ctesippus into the Palaestra, and the rest followed.

Upon entering we found that the boys had just been sacrificing; and this part of the festival was nearly at an end. They were all in their white array, and games at dice were going on among them. Most of them were in the outer court amusing themselves; but some were in a corner of the Apodyterium playing at odd and even with a number of dice, which they took out of little wicker baskets. There was also a circle of lookers-on; among them was Lysis. He was standing with the other boys and youths, having a crown upon his head, like a fair vision, and not less worthy of praise for his goodness than for his beauty. We left them, and went over to the opposite side of the room, where, finding

a quiet place, we sat down; and then we began to talk. This attracted Lysis, who was constantly turning round to look at us--he was evidently wanting to come to us. For a time he hesitated and had not the courage to come alone; but first of all, his friend Menexenus, leaving his play, entered the Palaestra from the court, and when he saw Ctesippus and myself, was going to take a seat by us; and then Lysis, seeing him, followed, and sat down by his side; and the other boys joined. I should observe that Hippothales, when he saw the crowd, got behind them, where he thought that he would be out of sight of Lysis, lest he should anger him; and there he stood and listened.

I turned to Menexenus, and said: Son of Demophon, which of you two youths is the elder?

That is a matter of dispute between us, he said.

And which is the nobler? Is that also a matter of dispute?

Yes, certainly.

And another disputed point is, which is the fairer?

The two boys laughed.

I shall not ask which is the richer of the two, I said; for you are friends, are you not?

Certainly, they replied.

And friends have all things in common, so that one of you can be no richer than the other, if you say truly that you are friends.

They assented. I was about to ask which was the juster of the two, and which was the wiser of the two; but at this moment Menexenus was called away by some one who came and said that the gymnastic-master wanted him. I supposed that he had to offer sacrifice. So he went away, and I asked Lysis some more questions. I dare say, Lysis, I said, that your father and mother love you very much.

Certainly, he said.

And they would wish you to be perfectly happy.

Yes.

But do you think that any one is happy who is in the condition of a slave, and who cannot do what he likes?

I should think not indeed, he said.

And if your father and mother love you, and desire that you should be happy, no one can doubt that they are very ready to promote your happiness.

Certainly, he replied.

And do they then permit you to do what you like, and never rebuke you or hinder you from doing what you desire?

Yes, indeed, Socrates; there are a great many things which they hinder me from doing.

What do you mean? I said. Do they want you to be happy, and yet hinder you from doing what you like? for example, if you want to mount one of your father's chariots, and take the reins at a race, they will not allow you to do so--they will prevent you?

Certainly, he said, they will not allow me to do so.

Whom then will they allow?

There is a charioteer, whom my father pays for driving.

And do they trust a hireling more than you? and may he do what he likes with the horses? and do they pay him for this?

They do.

But I dare say that you may take the whip and guide the mule-cart if you like;--they will permit that?

Permit me! indeed they will not.

Then, I said, may no one use the whip to the mules?

Yes, he said, the muleteer.

And is he a slave or a free man?

A slave, he said.

And do they esteem a slave of more value than you who are their son? And do they entrust their property to him rather than to you? and allow him to do what he likes, when they prohibit you? Answer me now: Are you your own master, or do they not even allow that?

Nay, he said; of course they do not allow it.

Then you have a master?

Yes, my tutor; there he is.

And is he a slave?

To be sure; he is our slave, he replied.

Surely, I said, this is a strange thing, that a free man should be governed by a slave. And what does he do with you?

He takes me to my teachers.

You do not mean to say that your teachers also rule over you?

Of course they do.

Then I must say that your father is pleased to inflict many lords and masters on you. But at any rate when you go home to your mother, she will let you have your own way, and will not interfere with your happiness; her wool, or the piece of cloth which she is weaving, are at your disposal: I am sure that there is nothing to hinder you from

touching her wooden spathe, or her comb, or any other of her spinning implements.

Nay, Socrates, he replied, laughing; not only does she hinder me, but I should be beaten if I were to touch one of them.

Well, I said, this is amazing. And did you ever behave ill to your father or your mother?

No, indeed, he replied.

But why then are they so terribly anxious to prevent you from being happy, and doing as you like?--keeping you all day long in subjection to another, and, in a word, doing nothing which you desire; so that you have no good, as would appear, out of their great possessions, which are under the control of anybody rather than of you, and have no use of your own fair person, which is tended and taken care of by another; while you, Lysis, are master of nobody, and can do nothing?

Why, he said, Socrates, the reason is that I am not of age.

I doubt whether that is the real reason, I said; for I should imagine that your father Democrates, and your mother, do permit you to do many things already, and do not wait until you are of age: for example, if they want anything read or written, you, I presume, would be the first person in the house who is summoned by them.

Very true.

And you would be allowed to write or read the letters in any order which you please, or to take up the lyre and tune the notes, and play with the fingers, or strike with the plectrum, exactly as you please, and neither father nor mother would interfere with you.

That is true, he said.

Then what can be the reason, Lysis, I said, why they allow you to do the one and not the other?

I suppose, he said, because I understand the one, and not the other.

Yes, my dear youth, I said, the reason is not any deficiency of years, but a deficiency of knowledge; and whenever your father thinks that you are wiser than he is, he will instantly commit himself and his possessions to you.

I think so.

Aye, I said; and about your neighbour, too, does not the same rule hold as about your father? If he is satisfied that you know more of housekeeping than he does, will he continue to administer his affairs himself, or will he commit them to you?

I think that he will commit them to me.

Will not the Athenian people, too, entrust their affairs to you when they see that you have wisdom enough to manage them?

Yes.

And oh! let me put another case, I said: There is the great king, and he has an eldest son, who is the Prince of Asia;--suppose that you and I go to him and establish to his satisfaction that we are better cooks than his son, will he not entrust to us the prerogative of making soup, and putting in anything that we like while the pot is boiling, rather than to the Prince of Asia, who is his son?

To us, clearly.

And we shall be allowed to throw in salt by handfuls, whereas the son will not be allowed to put in as much as he can take up between his fingers?

Of course.

Or suppose again that the son has bad eyes, will he allow him, or will he not allow him, to touch his own eyes if he thinks that he has no knowledge of medicine?

He will not allow him.

Whereas, if he supposes us to have a knowledge of medicine, he will allow us to do what we like with him--even to open the eyes wide and sprinkle ashes upon them, because he supposes that we know what is best?

That is true.

And everything in which we appear to him to be wiser than himself or his son he will commit to us?

That is very true, Socrates, he replied.

Then now, my dear Lysis, I said, you perceive that in things which we know every one will trust us,--Hellenes and barbarians, men and women,--and we may do as we please about them, and no one will like to interfere with us; we shall be free, and masters of others; and these things will be really ours, for we shall be benefited by them. But in things of which we have no understanding, no one will trust us to do as seems good to us--they will hinder us as far as they can; and not only strangers, but father and mother, and the friend, if there be one, who is dearer still, will also hinder us; and we shall be subject to others; and these things will not be ours, for we shall not be benefited by them. Do you agree?

He assented.

And shall we be friends to others, and will any others love us, in as far as we are useless to them?

Certainly not.

Neither can your father or mother love you, nor can anybody love anybody else, in so far as they are useless to them?

No.

And therefore, my boy, if you are wise, all men will be your friends and kindred, for you will be useful and good; but if you are not wise, neither father, nor mother, nor kindred, nor any one else, will be your friends. And in matters of which you have as yet no knowledge, can you

have any conceit of knowledge?

That is impossible, he replied.

And you, Lysis, if you require a teacher, have not yet attained to wisdom.

True.

And therefore you are not conceited, having nothing of which to be conceited.

Indeed, Socrates, I think not.

When I heard him say this, I turned to Hippothales, and was very nearly making a blunder, for I was going to say to him: That is the way, Hippothales, in which you should talk to your beloved, humbling and lowering him, and not as you do, puffing him up and spoiling him. But I saw that he was in great excitement and confusion at what had been said, and I remembered that, although he was in the neighbourhood, he did not want to be seen by Lysis; so upon second thoughts I refrained.

In the meantime Menexenus came back and sat down in his place by Lysis; and Lysis, in a childish and affectionate manner, whispered privately in my ear, so that Menexenus should not hear: Do, Socrates, tell Menexenus what you have been telling me.

Suppose that you tell him yourself, Lysis, I replied; for I am sure that you were attending.

Certainly, he replied.

Try, then, to remember the words, and be as exact as you can in repeating them to him, and if you have forgotten anything, ask me again the next time that you see me.

I will be sure to do so, Socrates; but go on telling him something new, and let me hear, as long as I am allowed to stay.

I certainly cannot refuse, I said, since you ask me; but then, as you

know, Menexenus is very pugnacious, and therefore you must come to the rescue if he attempts to upset me.

Yes, indeed, he said; he is very pugnacious, and that is the reason why I want you to argue with him.

That I may make a fool of myself?

No, indeed, he said; but I want you to put him down.

That is no easy matter, I replied; for he is a terrible fellow--a pupil of Ctesippus. And there is Ctesippus himself: do you see him?

Never mind, Socrates, you shall argue with him.

Well, I suppose that I must, I replied.

Hereupon Ctesippus complained that we were talking in secret, and keeping the feast to ourselves.

I shall be happy, I said, to let you have a share. Here is Lysis, who does not understand something that I was saying, and wants me to ask Menexenus, who, as he thinks, is likely to know.

And why do you not ask him? he said.

Very well, I said, I will; and do you, Menexenus, answer. But first I must tell you that I am one who from my childhood upward have set my heart upon a certain thing. All people have their fancies; some desire horses, and others dogs; and some are fond of gold, and others of honour. Now, I have no violent desire of any of these things; but I have a passion for friends; and I would rather have a good friend than the best cock or quail in the world: I would even go further, and say the best horse or dog. Yea, by the dog of Egypt, I should greatly prefer a real friend to all the gold of Darius, or even to Darius himself: I am such a lover of friends as that. And when I see you and Lysis, at your early age, so easily possessed of this treasure, and so soon, he of you, and you of him, I am amazed and delighted, seeing that I myself, although I am now advanced in years, am so far from having made a similar acquisition, that I do not even know in what way a friend is

acquired. But I want to ask you a question about this, for you have experience: tell me then, when one loves another, is the lover or the beloved the friend; or may either be the friend?

Either may, I should think, be the friend of either.

Do you mean, I said, that if only one of them loves the other, they are mutual friends?

Yes, he said; that is my meaning.

But what if the lover is not loved in return? which is a very possible case.

Yes.

Or is, perhaps, even hated? which is a fancy which sometimes is entertained by lovers respecting their beloved. Nothing can exceed their love; and yet they imagine either that they are not loved in return, or that they are hated. Is not that true?

Yes, he said, quite true.

In that case, the one loves, and the other is loved?

Yes.

Then which is the friend of which? Is the lover the friend of the beloved, whether he be loved in return, or hated; or is the beloved the friend; or is there no friendship at all on either side, unless they both love one another?

There would seem to be none at all.

Then this notion is not in accordance with our previous one. We were saying that both were friends, if one only loved; but now, unless they both love, neither is a friend.

That appears to be true.

Then nothing which does not love in return is beloved by a lover?

I think not.

Then they are not lovers of horses, whom the horses do not love in return; nor lovers of quails, nor of dogs, nor of wine, nor of gymnastic exercises, who have no return of love; no, nor of wisdom, unless wisdom loves them in return. Or shall we say that they do love them, although they are not beloved by them; and that the poet was wrong who sings--

'Happy the man to whom his children are dear, and steeds having single hoofs, and dogs of chase, and the stranger of another land'?

I do not think that he was wrong.

You think that he is right?

Yes.

Then, Menexenus, the conclusion is, that what is beloved, whether loving or hating, may be dear to the lover of it: for example, very young children, too young to love, or even hating their father or mother when they are punished by them, are never dearer to them than at the time when they are being hated by them.

I think that what you say is true.

And, if so, not the lover, but the beloved, is the friend or dear one?

Yes.

And the hated one, and not the hater, is the enemy?

Clearly.

Then many men are loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and are the friends of their enemies, and the enemies of their friends. Yet how absurd, my dear friend, or indeed impossible is this paradox of a man being an enemy to his friend or a friend to his enemy.

I quite agree, Socrates, in what you say.

But if this cannot be, the lover will be the friend of that which is loved?

True.

And the hater will be the enemy of that which is hated?

Certainly.

Yet we must acknowledge in this, as in the preceding instance, that a man may be the friend of one who is not his friend, or who may be his enemy, when he loves that which does not love him or which even hates him. And he may be the enemy of one who is not his enemy, and is even his friend: for example, when he hates that which does not hate him, or which even loves him.

That appears to be true.

But if the lover is not a friend, nor the beloved a friend, nor both together, what are we to say? Whom are we to call friends to one another? Do any remain?

Indeed, Socrates, I cannot find any.

But, O Menexenus! I said, may we not have been altogether wrong in our conclusions?

I am sure that we have been wrong, Socrates, said Lysis. And he blushed as he spoke, the words seeming to come from his lips involuntarily, because his whole mind was taken up with the argument; there was no mistaking his attentive look while he was listening.

I was pleased at the interest which was shown by Lysis, and I wanted to give Menexenus a rest, so I turned to him and said, I think, Lysis, that what you say is true, and that, if we had been right, we should never have gone so far wrong; let us proceed no further in this direction (for the road seems to be getting troublesome), but take the other path into which we turned, and see what the poets have to say; for they are to us

in a manner the fathers and authors of wisdom, and they speak of friends in no light or trivial manner, but God himself, as they say, makes them and draws them to one another; and this they express, if I am not mistaken, in the following words:--

'God is ever drawing like towards like, and making them acquainted.'

I dare say that you have heard those words.

Yes, he said; I have.

And have you not also met with the treatises of philosophers who say that like must love like? they are the people who argue and write about nature and the universe.

Very true, he replied.

And are they right in saying this?

They may be.

Perhaps, I said, about half, or possibly, altogether, right, if their meaning were rightly apprehended by us. For the more a bad man has to do with a bad man, and the more nearly he is brought into contact with him, the more he will be likely to hate him, for he injures him; and injurer and injured cannot be friends. Is not that true?

Yes, he said.

Then one half of the saying is untrue, if the wicked are like one another?

That is true.

But the real meaning of the saying, as I imagine, is, that the good are like one another, and friends to one another; and that the bad, as is often said of them, are never at unity with one another or with themselves; for they are passionate and restless, and anything which is at variance and enmity with itself is not likely to be in union or harmony with any other thing. Do you not agree?

Yes, I do.

Then, my friend, those who say that the like is friendly to the like mean to intimate, if I rightly apprehend them, that the good only is the friend of the good, and of him only; but that the evil never attains to any real friendship, either with good or evil. Do you agree?

He nodded assent.

Then now we know how to answer the question 'Who are friends?' for the argument declares 'That the good are friends.'

Yes, he said, that is true.

Yes, I replied; and yet I am not quite satisfied with this answer. By heaven, and shall I tell you what I suspect? I will. Assuming that like, inasmuch as he is like, is the friend of like, and useful to him--or rather let me try another way of putting the matter: Can like do any good or harm to like which he could not do to himself, or suffer anything from his like which he would not suffer from himself? And if neither can be of any use to the other, how can they be loved by one another? Can they now?

They cannot.

And can he who is not loved be a friend?

Certainly not.

But say that the like is not the friend of the like in so far as he is like; still the good may be the friend of the good in so far as he is good?

True.

But then again, will not the good, in so far as he is good, be sufficient for himself? Certainly he will. And he who is sufficient wants nothing--that is implied in the word sufficient.

Of course not.

And he who wants nothing will desire nothing?

He will not.

Neither can he love that which he does not desire?

He cannot.

And he who loves not is not a lover or friend?

Clearly not.

What place then is there for friendship, if, when absent, good men have no need of one another (for even when alone they are sufficient for themselves), and when present have no use of one another? How can such persons ever be induced to value one another?

They cannot.

And friends they cannot be, unless they value one another?

Very true.

But see now, Lysis, whether we are not being deceived in all this--are we not indeed entirely wrong?

How so? he replied.

Have I not heard some one say, as I just now recollect, that the like is the greatest enemy of the like, the good of the good?--Yes, and he quoted the authority of Hesiod, who says:

'Potter quarrels with potter, bard with bard, Beggar with beggar;'

and of all other things he affirmed, in like manner, 'That of necessity the most like are most full of envy, strife, and hatred of one another, and the most unlike, of friendship. For the poor man is compelled to be the friend of the rich, and the weak requires the aid of the strong,

and the sick man of the physician; and every one who is ignorant, has to love and court him who knows.' And indeed he went on to say in grandiloquent language, that the idea of friendship existing between similars is not the truth, but the very reverse of the truth, and that the most opposed are the most friendly; for that everything desires not like but that which is most unlike: for example, the dry desires the moist, the cold the hot, the bitter the sweet, the sharp the blunt, the void the full, the full the void, and so of all other things; for the opposite is the food of the opposite, whereas like receives nothing from like. And I thought that he who said this was a charming man, and that he spoke well. What do the rest of you say?

I should say, at first hearing, that he is right, said Menexenus.

Then we are to say that the greatest friendship is of opposites?

Exactly.

Yes, Menexenus; but will not that be a monstrous answer? and will not the all-wise eristics be down upon us in triumph, and ask, fairly enough, whether love is not the very opposite of hate; and what answer shall we make to them--must we not admit that they speak the truth?

We must.

They will then proceed to ask whether the enemy is the friend of the friend, or the friend the friend of the enemy?

Neither, he replied.

Well, but is a just man the friend of the unjust, or the temperate of the intemperate, or the good of the bad?

I do not see how that is possible.

And yet, I said, if friendship goes by contraries, the contraries must be friends.

They must.

Then neither like and like nor unlike and unlike are friends.

I suppose not.

And yet there is a further consideration: may not all these notions of friendship be erroneous? but may not that which is neither good nor evil still in some cases be the friend of the good?

How do you mean? he said.

Why really, I said, the truth is that I do not know; but my head is dizzy with thinking of the argument, and therefore I hazard the conjecture, that 'the beautiful is the friend,' as the old proverb says. Beauty is certainly a soft, smooth, slippery thing, and therefore of a nature which easily slips in and permeates our souls. For I affirm that the good is the beautiful. You will agree to that?

Yes.

This I say from a sort of notion that what is neither good nor evil is the friend of the beautiful and the good, and I will tell you why I am inclined to think so: I assume that there are three principles--the good, the bad, and that which is neither good nor bad. You would agree--would you not?

I agree.

And neither is the good the friend of the good, nor the evil of the evil, nor the good of the evil;--these alternatives are excluded by the previous argument; and therefore, if there be such a thing as friendship or love at all, we must infer that what is neither good nor evil must be the friend, either of the good, or of that which is neither good nor evil, for nothing can be the friend of the bad.

True.

But neither can like be the friend of like, as we were just now saying.

True.

And if so, that which is neither good nor evil can have no friend which is neither good nor evil.

Clearly not.

Then the good alone is the friend of that only which is neither good nor evil.

That may be assumed to be certain.

And does not this seem to put us in the right way? Just remark, that the body which is in health requires neither medical nor any other aid, but is well enough; and the healthy man has no love of the physician, because he is in health.

He has none.

But the sick loves him, because he is sick?

Certainly.

And sickness is an evil, and the art of medicine a good and useful thing?

Yes.

But the human body, regarded as a body, is neither good nor evil?

True.

And the body is compelled by reason of disease to court and make friends of the art of medicine?

Yes.

Then that which is neither good nor evil becomes the friend of good, by reason of the presence of evil?

So we may infer.

And clearly this must have happened before that which was neither good nor evil had become altogether corrupted with the element of evil--if itself had become evil it would not still desire and love the good; for, as we were saying, the evil cannot be the friend of the good.

Impossible.

Further, I must observe that some substances are assimilated when others are present with them; and there are some which are not assimilated: take, for example, the case of an ointment or colour which is put on another substance.

Very good.

In such a case, is the substance which is anointed the same as the colour or ointment?

What do you mean? he said.

This is what I mean: Suppose that I were to cover your auburn locks with white lead, would they be really white, or would they only appear to be white?

They would only appear to be white, he replied.

And yet whiteness would be present in them?

True.

But that would not make them at all the more white, notwithstanding the presence of white in them--they would not be white any more than black?

No.

But when old age infuses whiteness into them, then they become assimilated, and are white by the presence of white.

Certainly.

Now I want to know whether in all cases a substance is assimilated

by the presence of another substance; or must the presence be after a peculiar sort?

The latter, he said.

Then that which is neither good nor evil may be in the presence of evil, but not as yet evil, and that has happened before now?

Yes.

And when anything is in the presence of evil, not being as yet evil, the presence of good arouses the desire of good in that thing; but the presence of evil, which makes a thing evil, takes away the desire and friendship of the good; for that which was once both good and evil has now become evil only, and the good was supposed to have no friendship with the evil?

None.

And therefore we say that those who are already wise, whether Gods or men, are no longer lovers of wisdom; nor can they be lovers of wisdom who are ignorant to the extent of being evil, for no evil or ignorant person is a lover of wisdom. There remain those who have the misfortune to be ignorant, but are not yet hardened in their ignorance, or void of understanding, and do not as yet fancy that they know what they do not know: and therefore those who are the lovers of wisdom are as yet neither good nor bad. But the bad do not love wisdom any more than the good; for, as we have already seen, neither is unlike the friend of unlike, nor like of like. You remember that?

Yes, they both said.

And so, Lysis and Menexenus, we have discovered the nature of friendship--there can be no doubt of it: Friendship is the love which by reason of the presence of evil the neither good nor evil has of the good, either in the soul, or in the body, or anywhere.

They both agreed and entirely assented, and for a moment I rejoiced and was satisfied like a huntsman just holding fast his prey. But then a most unaccountable suspicion came across me, and I felt that

the conclusion was untrue. I was pained, and said, Alas! Lysis and Menexenus, I am afraid that we have been grasping at a shadow only.

Why do you say so? said Menexenus.

I am afraid, I said, that the argument about friendship is false: arguments, like men, are often pretenders.

How do you mean? he asked.

Well, I said; look at the matter in this way: a friend is the friend of some one; is he not?

Certainly he is.

And has he a motive and object in being a friend, or has he no motive and object?

He has a motive and object.

And is the object which makes him a friend, dear to him, or neither dear nor hateful to him?

I do not quite follow you, he said.

I do not wonder at that, I said. But perhaps, if I put the matter in another way, you will be able to follow me, and my own meaning will be clearer to myself. The sick man, as I was just now saying, is the friend of the physician--is he not?

Yes.

And he is the friend of the physician because of disease, and for the sake of health?

Yes.

And disease is an evil?

Certainly.

And what of health? I said. Is that good or evil, or neither?

Good, he replied.

And we were saying, I believe, that the body being neither good nor evil, because of disease, that is to say because of evil, is the friend of medicine, and medicine is a good: and medicine has entered into this friendship for the sake of health, and health is a good.

True.

And is health a friend, or not a friend?

A friend.

And disease is an enemy?

Yes.

Then that which is neither good nor evil is the friend of the good because of the evil and hateful, and for the sake of the good and the friend?

Clearly.

Then the friend is a friend for the sake of the friend, and because of the enemy?

That is to be inferred.

Then at this point, my boys, let us take heed, and be on our guard against deceptions. I will not again repeat that the friend is the friend of the friend, and the like of the like, which has been declared by us to be an impossibility; but, in order that this new statement may not delude us, let us attentively examine another point, which I will proceed to explain: Medicine, as we were saying, is a friend, or dear to us for the sake of health?

Yes.

And health is also dear?

Certainly.

And if dear, then dear for the sake of something?

Yes.

And surely this object must also be dear, as is implied in our previous admissions?

Yes.

And that something dear involves something else dear?

Yes.

But then, proceeding in this way, shall we not arrive at some first principle of friendship or dearness which is not capable of being referred to any other, for the sake of which, as we maintain, all other things are dear, and, having there arrived, we shall stop?

True.

My fear is that all those other things, which, as we say, are dear for the sake of another, are illusions and deceptions only, but where that first principle is, there is the true ideal of friendship. Let me put the matter thus: Suppose the case of a great treasure (this may be a son, who is more precious to his father than all his other treasures); would not the father, who values his son above all things, value other things also for the sake of his son? I mean, for instance, if he knew that his son had drunk hemlock, and the father thought that wine would save him, he would value the wine?

He would.

And also the vessel which contains the wine?

Certainly.

But does he therefore value the three measures of wine, or the earthen vessel which contains them, equally with his son? Is not this rather the true state of the case? All his anxiety has regard not to the means which are provided for the sake of an object, but to the object for the sake of which they are provided. And although we may often say that gold and silver are highly valued by us, that is not the truth; for there is a further object, whatever it may be, which we value most of all, and for the sake of which gold and all our other possessions are acquired by us. Am I not right?

Yes, certainly.

And may not the same be said of the friend? That which is only dear to us for the sake of something else is improperly said to be dear, but the truly dear is that in which all these so-called dear friendships terminate.

That, he said, appears to be true.

And the truly dear or ultimate principle of friendship is not for the sake of any other or further dear.

True.

Then we have done with the notion that friendship has any further object. May we then infer that the good is the friend?

I think so.

And the good is loved for the sake of the evil? Let me put the case in this way: Suppose that of the three principles, good, evil, and that which is neither good nor evil, there remained only the good and the neutral, and that evil went far away, and in no way affected soul or body, nor ever at all that class of things which, as we say, are neither good nor evil in themselves;--would the good be of any use, or other than useless to us? For if there were nothing to hurt us any longer, we should have no need of anything that would do us good. Then would be clearly seen that we did but love and desire the good because of the evil, and as the remedy of the evil, which was the disease; but if there

had been no disease, there would have been no need of a remedy. Is not this the nature of the good--to be loved by us who are placed between the two, because of the evil? but there is no use in the good for its own sake.

I suppose not.

Then the final principle of friendship, in which all other friendships terminated, those, I mean, which are relatively dear and for the sake of something else, is of another and a different nature from them. For they are called dear because of another dear or friend. But with the true friend or dear, the case is quite the reverse; for that is proved to be dear because of the hated, and if the hated were away it would be no longer dear.

Very true, he replied: at any rate not if our present view holds good.

But, oh! will you tell me, I said, whether if evil were to perish, we should hunger any more, or thirst any more, or have any similar desire? Or may we suppose that hunger will remain while men and animals remain, but not so as to be hurtful? And the same of thirst and the other desires,--that they will remain, but will not be evil because evil has perished? Or rather shall I say, that to ask what either will be then or will not be is ridiculous, for who knows? This we do know, that in our present condition hunger may injure us, and may also benefit us:--Is not that true?

Yes.

And in like manner thirst or any similar desire may sometimes be a good and sometimes an evil to us, and sometimes neither one nor the other?

To be sure.

But is there any reason why, because evil perishes, that which is not evil should perish with it?

None.

Then, even if evil perishes, the desires which are neither good nor evil

will remain?

Clearly they will.

And must not a man love that which he desires and affects?

He must.

Then, even if evil perishes, there may still remain some elements of love or friendship?

Yes.

But not if evil is the cause of friendship: for in that case nothing will be the friend of any other thing after the destruction of evil; for the effect cannot remain when the cause is destroyed.

True.

And have we not admitted already that the friend loves something for a reason? and at the time of making the admission we were of opinion that the neither good nor evil loves the good because of the evil?

Very true.

But now our view is changed, and we conceive that there must be some other cause of friendship?

I suppose so.

May not the truth be rather, as we were saying just now, that desire is the cause of friendship; for that which desires is dear to that which is desired at the time of desiring it? and may not the other theory have been only a long story about nothing?

Likely enough.

But surely, I said, he who desires, desires that of which he is in want?

Yes.

And that of which he is in want is dear to him?

True.

And he is in want of that of which he is deprived?

Certainly.

Then love, and desire, and friendship would appear to be of the natural or congenial. Such, Lysis and Menexenus, is the inference.

They assented.

Then if you are friends, you must have natures which are congenial to one another?

Certainly, they both said.

And I say, my boys, that no one who loves or desires another would ever have loved or desired or affected him, if he had not been in some way congenial to him, either in his soul, or in his character, or in his manners, or in his form.

Yes, yes, said Menexenus. But Lysis was silent.

Then, I said, the conclusion is, that what is of a congenial nature must be loved.

It follows, he said.

Then the lover, who is true and no counterfeit, must of necessity be loved by his love.

Lysis and Menexenus gave a faint assent to this; and Hippothales changed into all manner of colours with delight.

Here, intending to revise the argument, I said: Can we point out any difference between the congenial and the like? For if that is possible, then I think, Lysis and Menexenus, there may be some sense in our

argument about friendship. But if the congenial is only the like, how will you get rid of the other argument, of the uselessness of like to like in as far as they are like; for to say that what is useless is dear, would be absurd? Suppose, then, that we agree to distinguish between the congenial and the like--in the intoxication of argument, that may perhaps be allowed.

Very true.

And shall we further say that the good is congenial, and the evil uncongenial to every one? Or again that the evil is congenial to the evil, and the good to the good; and that which is neither good nor evil to that which is neither good nor evil?

They agreed to the latter alternative.

Then, my boys, we have again fallen into the old discarded error; for the unjust will be the friend of the unjust, and the bad of the bad, as well as the good of the good.

That appears to be the result.

But again, if we say that the congenial is the same as the good, in that case the good and he only will be the friend of the good.

True.

But that too was a position of ours which, as you will remember, has been already refuted by ourselves.

We remember.

Then what is to be done? Or rather is there anything to be done? I can only, like the wise men who argue in courts, sum up the arguments:--If neither the beloved, nor the lover, nor the like, nor the unlike, nor the good, nor the congenial, nor any other of whom we spoke--for there were such a number of them that I cannot remember all--if none of these are friends, I know not what remains to be said.

Here I was going to invite the opinion of some older person, when

suddenly we were interrupted by the tutors of Lysis and Menexenus, who came upon us like an evil apparition with their brothers, and bade them go home, as it was getting late. At first, we and the by-standers drove them off; but afterwards, as they would not mind, and only went on shouting in their barbarous dialect, and got angry, and kept calling the boys--they appeared to us to have been drinking rather too much at the Hermaea, which made them difficult to manage--we fairly gave way and broke up the company.

I said, however, a few words to the boys at parting: O Menexenus and Lysis, how ridiculous that you two boys, and I, an old boy, who would fain be one of you, should imagine ourselves to be friends--this is what the by-standers will go away and say--and as yet we have not been able to discover what is a friend!



Mykênê to Corinth

Project Gutenberg's *Studies of Travel - Greece*, by Edward A. Freeman

Mykênê and Tiryns have taught us a lesson in the history of those Greek cities which perished in days which we are used to look on as still ancient. Argos has given us one type of the Greek city which has lived on through all changes down to our own times. Corinth, a city hardly less famous than Argos, from some points of views even more famous, has had yet another destiny. After perishing utterly and rising again, Corinth has lived on through all later changes down to recent times, to give way, in recent times, to a new city bearing its own name. And on the way which leads us from Mykênê to Corinth we pass by a site of another kind, the site of a spot which never was a city, but which was as famous and venerable in Hellenic legend and Hellenic religion as any city not of the very foremost rank. Olympia is yet far off, but a foretaste of Olympia may well be had in the plain which was hallowed by the lesser festival, beneath the columns of Nemea, alongside of its

ruined church.

But how is Nemea to be reached? It is perhaps a tribute to the ancient greatness of Mykênê that it is there that civilization in one important branch may be said to come to an end. From Nauplia the journey by Tiryns and Argos may be made in a carriage; but it cannot be said that the latter part of the road from Argos to Mykênê is made according to the principles of Macadam. Indeed, we think it would be possible to carry the drive a little further than Mykênê, or, to speak more accurately, than Chorbati. But as such a drive would not take the traveller to any point in particular, and as he certainly could not continue it to Corinth, we may say that the carriage-road ends at Mykênê. Mykênê is the last point which the traveller can examine by that mode of journeying. At Chorbati he will begin his really Greek journey. He will have to go after the fashion of the country so far as to travel, as one of a cavalcade, on one of the small and hardy horses of the country, which seem, very much like their guides or drivers, to be able to do anything and to eat nothing. Perhaps however he may not so far conform to the fashion of the country as himself to become a package on the back of his pack-horse, and to sit there with both his legs on one side. Such a manner of going, besides other things to be said against it, has this manifest disadvantage, that it compels the traveller to take a one-sided view of the land which he goes through. On a journey on which the traveller has to take everything with him, he will hardly forget to take European saddles also. But, even with a European saddle, it needs a calm head and good horsemanship to take in much of the view, or to call up many of its associations, when you are, not indeed, like General Wolfe, “scrambling up,” but, if the phrase be accurate, “scrambling down”

... Rough rugged rocks
Well nigh perpendiklar.

The scrambling up is well enough; it is with the scrambling down, that the hardship comes. It is easy to convince one's intellect that there is really no danger, that the beast on which one is mounted, most unfairly called ὄλογον, knows thoroughly what he is about, and is far wiser than the ζῶον λογικόν whom he carries. To give him his head, and to let him go where he pleases, is the dictate of common-sense; but there are moments when common-sense will not be heard. At such moments

the traveller begins to wish that he was like Pheidippidês--most rightly named as sparing horses and not sparing his own feet--to whom the journey from Mykênê to Corinth would clearly have been no more than a pleasant morning's walk. Or better still would it be, if the days of Pausanias could come back, as there is indeed fair hope that they soon may, and that the whole road from Nauplia to Corinth may again be passed by the help of wheels. To the young and adventurous the novelty and roughness of the mode of going seem to have their charms. The traveller more advanced in life would be better pleased even to go on his own feet, and he might think it better still if he might enjoy the Eastern luxury of going

ἐφ' ἄρμαζῶν μαλθακός κατακείμενοι.

One thing however is certain--a land without inns is in every way better than a land with bad inns. The travelling party is self-supporting, and carries along with it all the necessities of life, as well as some of its comforts and conveniences. It is wonderful how shortly and how thoroughly a sleeping-room and a well-furnished dinner-table can be called as it were out of nothing. It may be better not to ask too minutely what becomes of the hospitable inhabitants who so readily turn out to make way for the strangers. Certain it is, that for the native part of the travelling party, reasonable and unreasonable, any quarters for the night will do. One point, however, calls for a protest; if the man chooses to look on his fustanella and his other garments as an inseparable part of himself, that is his own look-out; but it is hard to treat the unreasonable beast as if his pack-saddle were an inseparable part of him, and to give him no rest from his burthen either by day or by night. As for the traveller himself, he certainly would not exchange the fare, he might not always be anxious to exchange the lodging, which he makes for himself in the museum at Mykênê or in the house of the single priest of fallen Corinth; for those that he could get in some lands where, as there are inns, people do not take everything with them.

The cavalcade leaves Chorbati to make its way to Corinth by way of Nemea. Pausanias gives a choice of routes; the one chosen is that which he distinguishes as the τρητὸς, which he describes as narrow, but passable for carriages. Narrow enough it is, and well it deserves its name as a passage cleft through the rocks, but the wheel tracks

are there to show that carriages did once go that way. We are between Corinth and Argos, not between Thebes and Delphi; but we can well fancy the difficulties and the likelihood of quarrel if Laïos and Oïdipous met in such a strait as this.

We pass on, over ground which five-and-fifty years ago beheld one of the fiercest struggles of the War of Independence. Each of the passes, each of the heights, was held and stoutly contested in the August of 1822, when the men of Peloponnêsos beat back the Turkish host of Dramali in utter defeat. On our immediate path the ground rises and falls, but we are led over no special heights till, as we descend, the plain of Nemea breaks upon us. The columns rise in all the stateliness of solitude. Beyond rise the hills in which the ancients placed the cave of the Nemeian lion. This then is one of the seats of Pan-hellenic religion and Pan-hellenic festive gathering. If its glory did not reach that of Olympia or Delphi or even of the Isthmus, it is the first of the four to which our journey leads us, and we remember that Nemeian victories called forth the song of Pindar, and that Alkibiadês did not disdain either to win triumphs there, or to have those triumphs recorded in the choicest art of the sculpture of his day. There is the temple in the plain, a plain well fitted for the purposes of the games, and, cut out of one of the hills to the right as in the Larissa of Argos, we see where the theatre of Nemea once was. Though the place hardly ranks among sites of first-rate interest, though it calls up no such primæval associations as Mykênê which we have left, no such later associations as Corinth to which we are going, there is much to muse upon in the plain of Nemea. The legend of the lion comes home to us all the more strongly after seeing the sculptured forms which the world has agreed to call lions in the Mykênêan akropolis. Science and scholarship going hand in hand have given him a new interest. The lion, whose cave we cannot see, though we see the mountain side in which it is hollowed, may be mythical in his own person, but he is no mere creature of fiction. If, with Mr. Dawkins, we trace out the retreat of the lion from Europe, we see at Nemea one very important stage in his retreat. We trace him from the day when he made his lair in the caves of Mendip to the day when Herodotus so accurately marked out his geographical limits within the European continent. In his day the lion was still found in the region which stretched from the Achelôos to the Nestos; and when we look at the evidently careful nature of the notice itself, and when we go on to put that notice in its right place

among other notices, we shall not be tempted for one moment to think that the lions of Herodotus were other than real lions. Some indeed have suggested that Herodotus was so poor a naturalist as to mistake lynxes or wild cats for lions. No one will be likely to think this when he has once put the whole evidence in its right order. Just as we can believe in a Mykênaian empire without pledging ourselves to a personal Agamemnôn, so we can believe in lions in Peloponnêsos without pledging ourselves to a personal Hêraklês. The constant references to the lion in the Homeric poems must come from actual knowledge or from very recent tradition. The beast has a two-fold name; he is not only λέων but λῆς, and we are tempted, though it is slightly dangerous, to carry our thoughts on a little further with regard to his name. We ourselves seem never to have called him by anything but a name borrowed from the Latin; but are not *Löwe* and λῆς strictly cognate, signs of a time when the king of beasts had a name common to the whole Aryan family? Anyhow we may be sure that primitive legend would not have quartered the lion at Nemea, that primitive art would not have sculptured him at Mykênê, except at times when his presence in Peloponnêsos was, if a thing of the past at all, a thing of a very recent past.

The modern fauna of Nemea, as it strikes the passer-by, is of a lowlier and more harmless kind. The shepherdesses are there with their goats among the ruins, and a draught of their milk in the Greek May is a refreshment not to be scorned. And he who uses his eyes as he passes along may have the same luck as the infant Hermês when he met the tortoise in his path. The tortoise of that adventure willingly sacrificed himself for the good of mankind, that the baby-god might make a lyre out of his shell. The tortoise kept his place in the human nursery speech of Greece, and we may still ask the question of the Greek girls,

χελὶ χελώνη, τί ποεῖς ἐν τῷ μέσῳ;

There is a temptation to carry him off as a living memorial of the spot; but the way from Nemea to Britain is long.

But we must not forget man and his works when we are in one of the chief seats of Hellenic worship. Here is the temple of Nemeian Zeus, standing desolate in the plain, almost as some of our Cistercian abbeys stand in their valleys. The history of the holy place is

characteristic of Greek religion and of Greek politics. As Elis wrested the possession of Olympia from Pisa, so Argos wrested the possession of Nemea from Kleônai. In each case the possession of the temple and all that belonged to it was a source of dignity and political power. It was therefore eagerly sought for, and unscrupulously seized, by the greater city at the expense of the smaller. In the Olympian case indeed, one ground of refusing the ancient claim of the men of Pisa was that they had no city at all, but were mere villagers, unable and unworthy to preside over one of the great religious solemnities of the Greek nation. With our Northern notions, we are inclined to ask why Olympia and Nemea did not themselves grow into cities. Why did not a town grow up around the sanctuary? Not a few English towns, some of them of considerable size, grew up round some venerated monastery or other great church. A few devotees of the saint, a few dependents of his ministers, began the settlement. Traffic, shelter, all the motives which draw men together, increased the colony. In course of time it either wrested municipal rights from its ecclesiastical lords or received them as a free gift. In either case a new borough was formed, a borough which had not been made but had grown. But in Greek ideas a city was something which did not grow but was made. It might grow indefinitely after it was once made; but its first making did not take the form of growing. A new city was called into being by special and solemn acts, and no such foundation would have been endured at Olympia by Elis or at Nemea by either Argos or Kleônai. Some accommodation there must have been for the ministers of the God and his worshippers, even in ordinary times. At the great festival seasons, so we gather from the story of the assault on the tents of the envoys of Dionysios at Olympia, the crowds which assembled were encamped in the open plain like an army. But such a camp did not, like so many of the camps of Rome, grow into a permanent city. One might have fancied that it might become an object of Pan-hellenic policy to remove these national sanctuaries from the power of particular cities, and to place them under some kind of management in which all who had a right to share in the festival might be represented. But such an idea was foreign to the Greek political mind. The presidency of the temple and the games was essentially a privilege of this or that city. Pisa or Kleônai, Elis or Argos, were hosts, and the rest of Greece were their guests. There were, indeed, Amphiktionies, where a temple belonged to several cities in common; but the action of the most famous of their number in Greek affairs did not do much to impress the general Greek mind in favour

of that system of management. Throughout Grecian history the Delphic Amphiktiony either does nothing or becomes the tool of some powerful commonwealth or prince.

But, besides the memories of Nemea and the thoughts which it suggests, there is the temple itself. There is enough left to trace out the whole ground plan, and three columns soar above the plain, catching the eye as a prominent object in the descent. We say "soar," for these are perhaps the only Doric columns which do soar. They are taller and slenderer than any others to be seen in Greece, and they have thereby lost much of the true Doric character. That they are of much later date than the Attic Parthenôn none can doubt. Greek antiquaries are even inclined to fix them as late as Macedonian times. One almost wonders that an architect who departed so far from the primitive Doric idea in the proportion of his columns did not venture to adopt either of the later forms of capitals, one of which at least must have come into use before his time. We have seen the Ionic capital in use on the Athenian akropolis, and it certainly would have looked more in place as a finish to the columns of Nemea than the form which seems the natural finish at Poseidônia and even at Athens. But they are grand objects all the same. Nothing can wholly take away the inherent majesty of the Doric architecture, and beside them is a relic of even greater interest than themselves. Within the precinct, built out of the remains of the heathen sanctuary, are the ruins of a small church, clearly of early date, one of the many instances in which the professors of the new faith turned the holy places of the old faith to their own purposes. A train of thoughts are suggested by the neighbourhood of the two temples, now alike equally fallen. But on this head we shall do well to check ourselves; a greater opportunity for musings of this kind will be found on the western side of Peloponnêsos.

We leave the temple; we pass by the remains of the theatre; we climb to a fountain where the women gathering around may afford a study in the varied ornaments of their dress. We pass on; we come down again, marking a number of quarries which supplied stone for the neighbouring building and which have almost the look of buildings themselves. It is to our shame that we pass by the remains of Kleônai, its akropolis covering a low hill, without stopping for a nearer examination? Such questions are not always decided by the traveller for himself; they are for the most part settled for him. And he who has lingered at Mykênê in

the morning and must needs reach Corinth in the evening may be forgiven if he fail to give Kleônai her due. A halt and a meal are taken at a more convenient point, within sight of the hill of Kleônai, where a few trees give shade, and where a few ruined and forsaken houses remain as memories of the last earthquake. Of that earthquake we shall hear and see more at Corinth. We press on to the city of the two seas and the mountain crowned by its citadel. Before we reach them, we learn again at once how thoroughly Greece is a land of mountains, and how near one part of Greece is to another. Here in Peloponnêsos we see over the gulf to the mountains of Northern Greece. The hoary head of Parnassos rises before us,

Not in the phrensy of a dreamer's eye,
Not in the fabled landscape of a lay,
But soaring snow-clad through its native sky,
In the wild pomp of mountain majesty.

There in truth it soars, as no figure of speech, but as the mountain which guarded a Pan-hellenic sanctuary greater than that of Nemea. Presently we reach a winding descent, and a flat meadow alone lies between us and Akrokorinthos. The hills of Tiryns, Mykênê, and Kleônai, the Athenian akropolis itself, are as nothing to the Larissa of Argos; but the Argive height itself yields utterly to the great Corinthian steep. Still, as yet we see only the hinder side, the land side, of the mountain; we see the highest point of the fortress which crowns it, but we do not yet see how Akrokorinthos stands to Corinth, New and Old, and to the seas on either side of it. We have yet to study one of the sites of Greece than which none is of higher interest in general history, a site which has to tell a tale of ruin, of restoration, and of renewed ruin, of a different kind from any with which we have as yet met.



MINOR DIVINITIES.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Myths of Greece and Rome*, by H. A. Guerber

[Sidenote: Naiades and Oreades.]

According to the ancients' belief, every mountain, valley, plain, lake, river, grove, and sea was provided with some lesser deity, whose special duty was assigned by the powerful gods of Olympus. These were, for instance, the Naiades, beautiful water nymphs, who dwelt in the limpid depths of the fountains, and were considered local patrons of poetry and song.

The Oreades, or mountain nymphs, were supposed to linger in the mountain solitudes, and guide weary travelers safely through their rocky mazes.

"Mark how the climbing Oreads
Beckon thee to their Arcades!"

Emerson.

[Sidenote: Napææ and Dryades.]

As for the Napææ, they preferred to linger in the valleys, which were kept green and fruitful by their watchful care, in which task they were ably seconded by the Dryades, the nymphs of vegetation.

The very trees in the forest and along the roadside were supposed to be each under the protection of a special divinity called Hamadryad, said to live and die with the tree intrusted to her care.

"When the Fate of Death is drawing near,
First wither on the earth the beauteous trees,
The bark around them wastes, the branches fall,
And the nymph's soul, at the same moment, leaves
The sun's fair light."

Homer.

[Sidenote: Story of Dryope.]

A sweet and touching story was told by the ancients of a mortal who was changed into a Hamadryad. This young girl, whose name was Dryope, was a beautiful young princess, the daughter of Baucis, so bright and clever, that all who knew her loved her dearly. Of course, as soon as she was old enough to think of marriage, a host of suitors asked her hand, each eager to win for his bride one so beautiful and gifted.

"No nymph of all Æchalia could compare,
For beauteous form, with Dryope the fair."

Ovid (Pope's tr.).

Fully aware of the importance of making a wise choice, Dryope took her time, and finally decided to marry Andræmon, a worthy young prince, who possessed every charm calculated to win a fair girl's heart. The young people were duly married, and daily rejoiced in their happiness, which seemed almost too great for earth, when they became the parents of a charming little son.

Every day Dryope carried the child along the banks of a little lake close by the palace, where bloomed a profusion of gay-colored flowers.

"A lake there was, with shelving banks around,
Whose verdant summit fragrant myrtles crown'd.
Those shades, unknowing of the Fates, she sought,
And to the Naiads flowery garlands brought;
Her smiling babe (a pleasing charge) she press'd
Between her arms."

Ovid (Pope's tr.).

One day, while wandering there as usual, accompanied by her sister, she saw a lotus blossom, and pointed it out to her little son. He no sooner saw the brilliant flower, than he stretched out his little hands. To please him, the fond mother plucked it and gave it to him.

She had scarcely done so, when she noticed drops of blood trickling from the broken stem; and while she stood there, speechless with

wonder, a voice was heard accusing her of having slain Lotis, a nymph, who, to escape the pursuit of Priapus, god of the shade, had assumed the guise of a flower.

"Lotis the nymph (if rural tales be true),
As from Priapus' lawless love she flew,
Forsook her form; and fixing here became
A flowery plant, which still preserves her name."

Ovid (Pope's tr.).

Recovering from her first speechless terror, Dryope turned to flee, with a pitiful cry of compassion on her pale lips, but, to her astonishment, she could not leave the spot: her feet seemed rooted to the ground. She cast a rapid glance downward to ascertain what could so impede her progress, and noticed the rough bark of a tree growing with fearful rapidity all around her.

Higher and higher it rose, from her knees to her waist, and still it crept upward, in spite of her frantic attempts to tear it away from her shapely limbs. In despair she raised her trembling hands and arms to heaven to implore aid; but, ere the words were spoken, her arms were transformed into twisted branches, and her hands were filled with leaves.

Nothing human now remained of poor Dryope except her sweet, tear-stained face; but this too would soon vanish under the all-involving bark. She therefore took hasty leave of her father, sister, husband, and son, who, attracted by her first cry, had rushed to give her all the assistance in their power. The last words were quickly spoken, but none too soon, for the bark closed over the soft lips and hid the lovely features from view.

"She ceased at once to speak, and ceased to be,
And all the nymph was lost within the tree:
Yet latent life through her new branches reign'd,
And long the plant a human heat retain'd."

Ovid (Pope's tr.).

One of Dryope's last requests had been that her child might often play beneath her shady branches; and when the passing winds rustled through her leaves, the ancients said it was "Dryope's lone lulling of her child."

[Sidenote: Satyrs and Pan.]

The male divinities of the woods, which were also very numerous, were mostly Satyrs,--curious beings with a man's body and a goat's legs, hair, and horns. They were all passionately fond of music and revelry, and were wont to indulge in dancing at all times and in all places. The most famous among all the Satyrs was Silenus, Bacchus' tutor; and Pan, or Consentes, god of the shepherds, and the personification of nature. The latter was the reputed son of Mercury and a charming young nymph named Penelope; and we are told, that, when his mother first beheld him, she was aghast, for he was the most homely as well as the most extraordinary little creature she had ever seen. His body was all covered with goat's hair, and his feet and ears were also those of a goat.

Amused at the sight of this grotesque little divinity, Mercury carried him off to Olympus, where all the gods turned him into ridicule. Pan was widely worshiped in olden times, however; and the ancients not only decked his altars with flowers, but sang his praises, and celebrated festivals in his honor.

"He is great and he is just,
He is ever good, and must
Be honored. Daffodillies,
Roses, pinks, and loved lilies,
Let us fling, while we sing,
Ever Holy! Ever Holy!
Ever honored! Ever young!
The great Pan is ever sung!"

Beaumont and Fletcher.

[Sidenote: Story of Syrinx.]

Pan was equally devoted to music, the dance, and pretty nymphs. He saw

one of the nymphs, Syrinx, whom he immediately loved; but unfortunately for him, she, frightened at his appearance, fled. Exasperated by her persistent avoidance of him, Pan once pursued and was about to overtake her, when she paused, and implored Gæa to protect her. The prayer was scarcely ended, when she found herself changed into a clump of reeds, which the panting lover embraced, thinking he had caught the maiden, who had stood in that very spot a few moments before.

His deception and disappointment were so severe, that they wrung from him a prolonged sigh, which, passing through the rustling reeds, produced plaintive tones. Pan, seeing Syrinx had gone forever, took seven pieces of the reed, of unequal lengths, bound them together, and fashioned from them a musical instrument, which was called by the name of the fair nymph.

"Fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph!--poor Pan!--how he did weep to find
Naught but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream; a half-heard strain
Full of sweet desolation--balmy pain."

Keats.

Pan was supposed to delight in slyly overtaking belated travelers and inspiring them with sudden and unfounded fears,--from him called "panic." He is generally represented with a syrinx and shepherd's crook, and a pine garland around his misshapen head.

[Sidenote: Silvan deities.]

The Romans also worshiped three other divinities of nature entirely unknown to the Greeks; i.e., Silvanus, Faunus, and Fauna, the latter's wife, who had charge over the woods and plants. Priapus, god of the shade, was also a rural deity, but his worship was only known along the shores of the Hellespont.

[Sidenote: Flora and Zephyrus.]

The fairest among all the lesser gods was doubtless Flora, goddess of flowers, who married Zephyrus, the gentle god of the south wind, and wandered happily with him from place to place, scattering her favors with lavish generosity. She was principally worshiped by young girls, and the only offerings ever seen on her altars were fruits and garlands of beautiful flowers. Her festivals, generally celebrated in the month of May, were called the Floralia.

[Illustration: "A FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY."--Thumann. (Vertumnus and Pomona.)]

"Crowds of nymphs,
Soft voiced, and young, and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses and pinks and violets to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May."

Keats.

[Sidenote: Vertumnus and Pomona.]

Vertumnus and Pomona were the special divinities of the garden and orchard. They are represented with pruning knives and shears, gardening implements, and fruits and flowers. Pomona was very coy indeed, and had no desire to marry. Vertumnus, enamored of her charms, did his best to make her change her mind, but she would not even listen to his pleadings.

At last the lover had recourse to stratagem, disguised himself as an aged crone, entered Pomona's garden, and inquired how it happened that such a very charming young woman should remain so long unmarried. Then, having received a mocking answer, he began to argue with her, and finally extracted an avowal, that, among all the suitors, one alone was worthy of her love, Vertumnus. Vertumnus seized the favorable opportunity, revealed himself, and clasped her to his breast. Pomona, perceiving that she had hopelessly betrayed herself, no longer refused to wed, but allowed him to share her labors, and help her turn the luscious fruit to ripen in the autumn sunshine.

[Sidenote: Sea deities.]

The lesser divinities of the sea were almost as numerous as those of the land, and included the lovely Oceanides and Nereides, together with their male companions the Tritons, who generally formed Neptune's regal train.

[Sidenote: Story of Glaucus.]

One of the lesser sea gods, Glaucus, was once a poor fisherman, who earned his daily bread by selling the fish he caught in his nets. On one occasion he made an extra fine haul, and threw his net full of fish down upon a certain kind of grass, which the flapping fish immediately nibbled, and, as if endowed with extraordinary powers, bounded back into the waves and swam away.

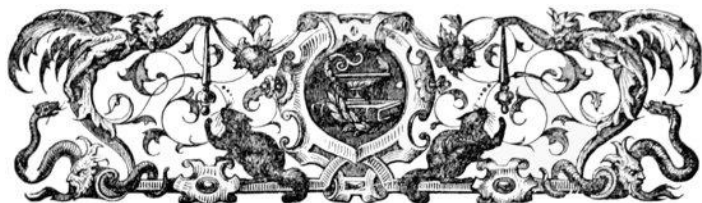
Greatly surprised at this occurrence, Glaucus began chewing a few blades of this peculiar grass, and immediately felt an insane desire to plunge into the sea,--a desire which soon became so intense, that he could no longer resist it, but dived down into the water. The mere contact with the salt waves sufficed to change his nature; and swimming about comfortably in the element, where he now found himself perfectly at home, he began to explore the depths of the sea.

"I plung'd for life or death. To interknit
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
Might seem a work of pain; so not enough
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
Whole days and days in sheer astonishment;
Forgetful utterly of self-intent;
Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth show
His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,
I try'd in fear the pinions of my will.
'Twas freedom! and at once I visited
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed."

Keats.

Glaucus was worshiped most particularly by the fishermen and boatmen,

whose vessels he was supposed to guard from evil, and whose nets were often filled to overflow through his intervention.



ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ ΦΕΞΗ

ΠΑΥΛΟΥ NIPBANA

(from Project Gutenberg's *The shepherdess with the pearls*, by Pavlos Nirvanas)

Η ΒΟΣΚΟΠΟΥΛΑ

ΜΕ ΤΑ ΜΑΡΓΑΡΙΤΑΡΙΑ

Έχουνε να πουν πως όλα τα παραμύθια είναι ιστορίες αληθινές, που γινήκανε μια φορά κ' έναν καιρό στα παλιά τα χρόνια. Είναι πολλές απ' αυτές που κανένας δεν τις θυμάται, γιατί από στόμα σε στόμα σβυστήκανε και χάθηκαν. Κ' εκείνοι που ανιστορούν καινούργια παραμύθια, που κανένας δεν τάχει ακουσμένα, δεν τα γεννούν απ' το κεφάλι τους, ούτε κανένας τους τάχει ειπωμένα απ' τους τωρινούς. Γι' αυτό έχουνε να πουν πως οι παλιοί άνθρωποι, που χρόνια τώρα τους έχει φαγωμένα το χώμα, και που μια φορά κ' έναν καιρό περάσανε στον απάνω κόσμο μεγάλα βάσανα και πάθη, σε αγάπες, σ' έχθρητες και σε πολέμους, θέλοντας να μη ξεχασθούν τα βάσανά τους, ξαναγυρίζουνε στον κόσμο και ανιστορούνε τη ζωή τους στους αλαφροΐσκιωτους ανθρώπους.

Έτσι κανένας μέσα στον ύπνο του ή μέσα στο κατάχνιασμά του ακούει μιαν ιστορία παλαική και σαν ερθή στον εαυτό του, θαρρεί πως έχει ακουσμένα κάποιο παραμύθι και το χαίρεται μονάχος του και το ξαναλέει και στους άλλους. Έτσι έχω ακουσμένα κ' εγώ τούτο το παραμύθι, ξαπλωμένος στον ήσκιο μιας καρυδιάς, μέσα στην άψη του Θεριστή. Είναι το Παραμύθι της Βοσκοπούλας με τα Μαργαριτάρια.

Στα μέρη τούτα τα δικά μας ήτανε μια φορά ένα βασίλειο. Κι' ο βασιλιάς ο γέρος είχ' ένα μονάκριβο παιδί, που τ' αγαπούσε πιο πολύ κι' απ' την κορώνα του. Και η γρηά η βασίλισσα, που είχε τα μεγαλύτερα μαργαριτάρια που βρίσκονται στη γη, το λάτρευε περισσότερο απ' τους θησαυρούς της και νανουρίζοντάς το σαν ήτανε μικρό στην κούνια τη χρυσή του, άπλωνε στο κορμάκι του τα μαργαριτάρια της και τούλεγε: «Σα μεγαλώσης με το καλό και πάρης την κορώνα του πατέρα σου και πάρης και βασιλοπούλα όμορφη γυναίκα στο πλευρό σου, δικά σου είναι τα πλούτη κ' οι θησαυροί μου, και τούτα τα μαργαριτάρια, που δε βρίσκονται παρόμοια στη γη, θαστράψουν πάλι σε χαρές και ξεφαντώματα στον άσπρο το λαιμό της νέας βασίλισσας». Κι' άπλωνε τα μαργαριτάρια στο κορμάκι του και το νανούριζε γλυκά. Και τα χοντρά μαργαριτάρια, μες στην κούνια τη χρυσή, μοιάζανε σα μεγάλα δάκρυα.

Σα μεγάλωσε το βασιλόπουλο κ' έγινε όμορφο παλικάρι, όλες οι χάρες το στολίσανε με τα χαρίσματά τους. Το μονάκριβο το βασιλόπουλο ήτανε κι' ο πρώτος ο λεβέντης στο βασίλειο. Οι χάρες του ακουστήκανε ως τα πιο μάκρυνα βασίλεια και πλούσιοι βασιλιάδες, από στεριά και θάλασσα, στέλνανε προξενιές στο γέρο βασιλιά για το χαριτωμένο τον υγιό του. Μα το βασιλόπουλο δεν έβαλε ποτέ αγάπη με το νου του, τα μάτια του ποτέ δεν τάρριξε απάνω σε κοπέλλα κ' έλειπε πάντ' από τα πανηγύρια και τα ξεφαντώματα του παλατιού. Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς και η γρηά η βασίλισσα τόχανε μαράζι στην καρδιά τους. Μα το βασιλόπουλο δεν άκουγε ούτε ορμήνιες ούτε παρακάλια. Κάθε αυγή έπαιρνε το τουφέκι του στον ώμο και τραβούσε στους λόγγους και τα βουνά. Έτσι περνούσε όλον τον καιρό του, δρασκελώντας βράχους και γκρεμνά, και δεν ήτανε τόπος στο μεγάλο του βασίλειο, που δεν τον ήξερε, δεν ήτανε κορφή που δεν την είχε πατημένα, δεν ήτανε λόγγος που δε χάρηκε τον ήσκιο του, δεν ήτανε ρεματιά που δεν τον δέχτηκε κι' ακρογιαλιά που δεν τον είδε. Τόμορφο βασιλόπουλο ήτανε βασιλιάς αληθινός στο βασίλειό του. Τον ξέρανε τα χιόνια στις απάτητες κορφές, τα δέντρα τα χιλιόχρονα τον χαιρετούσανε, ταηδόνια μες στις ρεματιές τον προβοδίζανε και στακρογιάλια τασημένα τα κυματάκια του φιλούσανε τα πόδια του. Τόμορφο το βασιλόπουλο ήτανε αληθινός βασιλιάς στο βασίλειό του. Και ταγρίμια του βουνού μεριάζανε ακόμα στο διάβα του και στις ερημικές τις στάνες ταγριόσκυλλα τονέ ζυγώνανε σκυφτά και

ταπεινά, κουνώντας την ουρά τους.

Ένα πρωί ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς έκραξε το παιδί του και το φίλησε στο κούτελο. Το κάθισε σιμά του σε χρυσό θρονί και του είπε:

— Άκουσε, παιδί μου, αυτά που θα σου πω, και νάχης την ευχή μου. Σήμερα είναι μεγάλη μέρα. Απ' το μεγάλο το βασίλειο της Ανατολής, που μας χωρίζουνε θάλασσες πλατειές και πιο πλατειά ακόμα η έχθρα η παλιά μας κ' οι πόλεμοί μας, φτάσανε προξενητάδες διαλεκτοί, με καράβια φορτωμένα χρυσάφια και χαρίσματα. Ώρα την ώρα φτάνουν οι τρανοί μουσαφिरαίοι και το παλάτι μας θα ιδή μεγάλο πανηγύρι σήμερα.

Το βασιλόπουλο άκουσε αδιάφορα τα λόγια του πατέρα του. Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς του χάιδεψε με τα γέρικα δάκτυλά του τα χρυσά μαλλιά και του είπε :

— Άκουσε, παιδί μου. Πέταξε το τουφέκι σου σε μια γωνιά, βγάλε τα ρούχα σου τα σκονισμένα και τα ταπεινά και φόρα τα χρυσά και τα βελούδα σου. Σήμερα είναι μεγάλη γιορτή στο παλάτι μας.

Το βασιλόπουλο αποκρίθηκε:

— Κι' αν είναι μεγάλη γιορτή στο παλάτι μας, με το καλό να ξεφαντώσετε, Κι' αν είναι τρανοί μουσαφिरαίοι στο τραπέζι μας, φτάνουνε ο βασιλιάς και η βασίλισσα να τους καλοδεχτούνε. Κι' αν είναι προξενητάδες για τα μένανε, εγώ παίρνω το τουφέκι μου και πάω στη δουλειά μου.

Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς θύμωσε βαριά, το αίμα του τον έπνιξε στο λαιμό και τρέμοντας ολόσωμος, είπε βαρύ λόγο στον αγαπημένο του. Μα το βασιλόπουλο δεν άλλαζε γνώμη.

— Αλλοίμονο! είπε ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς. Λίγα χρόνια η γη μας έμεινε απότιστη απ' το αίμα. Τα νιάτα μου μες στους πολέμους πέρασαν. Ο ανθός της χώρας μας θερίστηκε χρόνια και χρόνια απ' το δρεπάνι των οχτρών μας. Και τώρα σαν αρνηθούμε το χάρισμά τους, πάλε το αίμα μας θα ποτίση το διψασμένο χώμα — και ποιος ξέρει — σκλάβοι κ' εμείς, σκλαβωμένη κ' η γη μας, θα συρθούμε στα πόδια των οχτρών μας. Άμποτε μόνο, κλεισμένα τα μάτια μου, να μην

ιδούνε τη μεγάλη συφορά.

Το βασιλόπουλο πετάχτηκε απάνω και τα μάτια του αστράψανε μέσα στα σύννεφα των λογισμών του.

— Κι' αν οι οχτροί μας μελίσσι πέσουνε στη χώρα μας, καλώς τους να κοπιάσουν. Το χέρι ετούτο δεν απόκαμε ποτέ κρατώντας τάρματα. Κι' αν θέλη ο βασιλιάς ο πατέρας μου να κάνη χάρισμα στους οχτρούς του, έχει χώρες και θησαυρούς κι' ας τους χαρίση. Κι' αν θέλη να διαφεντέψω τη χώρα του, το αίμα μου είναι δικό του κι' ας το χύση στα πόδια τους. Μ' αν θέλη την καρδιά μου να την κάνη χάρισμα, άδικα πασχίζει κι' αγωνίζεται. Αυτή δεν την ορίζει.

Και σκύβοντας λυπητερά το κεφάλι του, για να κρύψη δυο δάκρυα που στάζανε στα χλωμά του μάγουλα, είπε σιγά:

— Αλλοίμονο! Ούτ' εγώ ατός μου την ορίζω.

Κ' έφυγε βιαστικά, πνίγοντας ταναφυλλητά του στήθους του.

Το βασιλόπουλο κρέμασε το τουφέκι στον ώμο και ξεκίνησε για το βουνό. Μέσα στις πυκνές τις λαγκαδιές ήτανε το λημέρι του. Μα το βασιλόπουλο ήτανε καιρός τώρα που δεν είχε ρίξει τουφεκιά στο λόγγο. Οι πέρδικες πετούσανε άφοβα σιμά του, τα κοτσύφια του σφυρίζανε απάνω απ' το κεφάλι του, και τα μικρόπουλα μέσα στις φυλλωσιές δεν κόβανε το τραγούδι τους σαν περνούσε. Φτερό δε σήκωνε το τουφέκι του να κτυπήση. Ήτανε καιρός τώρα που τα πουλιά είχανε πάρει για το βασιλόπουλο ανθρωπινή λαλίτσα και του μιλούσανε λόγια γλυκά και μπιστεμένα.

Καθώς περνούσε ο κυνηγός μέσα στα σύθαμπα του λόγγου, γυρεύοντας — κάτι γυρεύοντας με τα μάτια ολόγυρα — , ένας πετροκότсуφας, πούχε χωθή μέσα στα κλαριά, φεύγοντας την άψη του ήλιου, του σφύριξε στ' αυτί

— Πάρε την πλαγιά του βουνού και κατέβα στη ρεματιά. Απάνω στο στρογγυλό λιθάρι, που το σκεπάζει ο γεροπλάτανος, δροσολογείται η αγάπη σου.

Ο κυνηγός πήρε βιαστικά τα πόδια του, έφτασε στην πλαγιά του

βουνού και κατέβηκε στη ρεματιά. Ταηδόνια τραγουδούσανε μέσα στα δασά πλατάνια, και πάνω στις ρίζες τους, που τις πότιζε γαργαλιστό το τρεχούμενο νεράκι, το άσπρο κοπάδι δροσολογιότανε. Απάνω στο στρογγυλό λιθάρι, που το σκέπαζε ο γεροπλάτανος, καθότανε η αγάπη του. Με του λαγού την περπατησιά έφτασε ο κυνηγός στο στρογγυλό λιθάρι. Η βοσκοπούλα είχε ξαπλωμένο το άπλερο κορμί της απάνω στο λιθάρι κι' ακουμπούσε το ξέγνοιαστο κεφάλι απάνω στη γέρικη φλούδα του πλάτανου. Ώρα την ώρα την πήρε ο ύπνος και αηδονάκια νανουρίζανε τον ύπνο της κι' ο γεροπλάτανος μουρμούριζε στους διαβάτες μη λάχη και την ξυπνήσουν. Ο κυνηγός, με το τουφέκι στον ώμο, στάθηκε αγνάντια και την κύτταζε. Του φάνηκε σα μεσημερνή νεράιδα πούκανε την κοιμισμένη, καρτερώντας να του πάρη τη μιλιά. Κ' έμεινε βουβός ώρα πολλή κυττάζοντάς την. Μα και νάθελε να μιλήση δεν μπορούσε. Η φωνή του είχε στεγνώσει στο λαιμό και τα χείλια του μόνο αναδέβανε αλαφρά με το ανάδεμα των χειλιών της κοιμισμένης. Λες πως τον είχε πάρει κι' αυτόν ένας γλυκός ύπνος και πως βλέπανε κ' οι δυο το ίδιο τόνειρο.

Ο γεροπλάτανος ο ζηλιάρης έρριξ' ένα φύλλο ξερό απάνω στο κούτελο της κοιμισμένης και την ξύπνησε. Μπροστά στα μάτια της είδε άξαφνα η κοπέλλα το νέο τον κυνηγό, που πάντα τον εκαρτερούσε και πάντα τον απόδιωχνε. Μια ντροπή χύθηκε κ' έβαψε με κοκκινάδι το πρόσωπό της. Γιατί οι κοπέλλες έχουνε κρυφό και μυστικό τον ύπνο τους και τον φυλάνε απ' τα μάτια των παλικάριών.

Ο κυνηγός την καλημέρισε με πνιγμένη φωνή.

— Τι θέλεις από μένα, κυνηγέ, με το τουφέκι; του είπε δειλά. Εδώ δεν είναι πέρδικες, δεν είναι μήτε κοτσύφια. Εδώ αηδονάκια μόνο κελαϊδούν στις φυλλωσιές. Πάρε το τουφέκι σου, κυνηγέ, και τράβα στη δουλειά σου...

— Όμορφη κοπέλλα, της είπε γλυκά ο κυνηγός, εγώ δεν κυνηγώ κοτσύφια μήτε πέρδικες. Κ' εκεί που κελαϊδούν ταηδόνια είναι η λαχτάρα μου.

— Πάρε το τουφέκι σου, κυνηγέ, και τράβα στη δουλειά σου. Τα λάφια κ' οι λαγοί δεν έρχονται να ξεδιψάσουν στη ρεματιά μεσημεριάτικα. Εδώ μονάχα το ασπρόμαλλο κοπάδι μου σβύνει τη δίψα του. Κι' αν θέλεις λαγούς και λάφια, πάρε το τουφέκι σου και τράβα

στη δουλειά σου.

Ο κυνηγός ζύγιασε πιο σιμά της και της είπε πάλι:

— Εγώ κι' αν είμαι κυνηγός δεν κυνηγώ λαγούς και λάφια. Κ' εκεί που το ασπρόμαλλο κοπάδι σβύνει τη δίψα του, θέλω κ' εγώ να ξεδιψάσω. Όμορφη πιστικιά, δος μου το αθάνατο νερό απ' τα χειλάκια σου.

Η όμορφη βοσκόπουλα, που κάθε μέρα καρτερούσε το νιο τον κυνηγό και κάθε μέρα τον απόδιωχνε με την κάκια της αγάπης, σηκώθηκε απάνω μ' έναν όμορφο θυμό και ξαναείπε:

— Αλλοίμονο σ' εσένα, κυνηγέ. Εγώ έχω αδέρφια και ξαδέρφια κι' αν σε ιδούν σιμά μου, το αίμα σου θα τρέξη ποτάμι στο πράσινο το χορταράκι. Αλλοίμονο σ' εσένα, κυνηγέ, και τρισαλλοίμονό σου.

Ο νέος ο κυνηγός την κύτταξε γλυκά.

— Κι' αν έχης αδέρφια και ξαδέρφια, χαρά σ' εμένανε, να τρέξη το αίμα μου ποτάμι στην ποδιά σου...

Τότε τα δυο τα χείλια της βοσκοπούλας του είπανε πάλι με τρομάρα:

— Φύγε, κυνηγέ, από σιμά μου...

Και τα δυο της τα μάτια του είπανε με λαχτάρα:

— Έλα, κυνηγέ, και πέσε στην αγκαλιά μου.

Ο νέος ο κυνηγός δεν άκουσε τα δυο της τα χείλια, μόνο άκουσε τα δυο της τα ματάκια κ' έπεσε στην αγκαλιά της. Χίλια χρόνια βάσταξε το αγκάλιασμά τους και τα φιλιά τους άλλα τόσα.

Και σα σήκωσε το κεφάλι του ο κυνηγός απ' τα γλυκά της στήθια, έβγαλε από μέσα απ' την τσάντα του μια τραχηλιά με μαργαριτάρια και την πέρασε στον άσπρο της λαιμό.

Η βοσκοπούλα ξαφνιάστηκε. Ποτέ δεν είχε ιδεί τόσο όμορφες χάντρες.

Ο νέος ο κυνηγός της είπε τότε:

— Μην το βγάλεις ποτέ απ' το λαιμό σου. Αυτό είναι το θυμητικό της αγάπης μας.

Η βοσκοπούλα γύρισε και κύτταξε τα όμορφα μαργαριτάρια στο λαιμό της και δυο δάκρυα στάζανε απάνω στα θαμπά πετράδια.

— Ποτέ μου δεν είδα τόσες όμορφες χάντρες, ξαναείπε.

Ο νέος ο κυνηγός φίλησε τον άσπρο της λαιμό, με τα θαμπά μαργαριτάρια. Ένα γλυκό αεράκι σάλεψε τα κλαδιά του γεροπλάτανου και δυο αχτίδες χρυσές γλυστρήσανε απ' τη φυλλωσιά του και πλέξανε μια χρυσή κορώνα στο κεφάλι της.

Ο νέος ο κυνηγός την κύτταξε γλυκά και είπε μέσα του:

— Πόσο της μοιάζει για βασίλισσα!

Στο μακρινό βασίλειο της Ανατολής, θυμωμένος ο ξένος βασιλιάς για την προσβολή που γίνηκε στη θυγατέρα του, θυμήθηκε τις παλιές του έχθρες κ' έστειλε, με δυνατές αρμάδες, μυριάδες ασκέρι να πολεμήσουν τον εχθρό του. Όλ' η χώρα σηκώθηκε στο ποδάρι, να διαφεντέψει την πατρίδα. Από αμούστακο παιδί ως ασπρομάλλη γέρο ζωστήκανε όλοι τάρματα και ξεκίνησαν στα σύνορα. Το βασιλόπουλο, πρώτο και καλύτερο, ζώστηκε τα χρυσά του τάρματα, άφησε τους λόγγους και τις ρεματιές, σέλωσε το άσπρο τάλογό του και ξεκίνησε μπροστά απ' τα παλικάρια να σώση την όμορφη τη χώρα του, που κινδύνευε από δική του αιτία. Πήρε την ευχή του γέρου του πατέρα του, πήρε και την ευχή της γρηάς βασίλισσας, έβαλε φτερά στα πόδια του και χάθηκε σαν την αστραπή. Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς, προβοδίζοντάς τον, τον φίλησε στο κούτελο και του είπε:

— Ο Θεός μαζί σου. Κι' όταν γυρίσης όπως θέλει ο Θεός, με τα γέρικα τα χέρια μου θα βγάλω την κορώνα απ' το κεφάλι μου να τη φορέσω στο δικό σου. Γιατί έτσι μου τη φόρεσε κ' εμένανε ο πατέρας μου.

...Δυο χρόνια πολεμούσε το βασιλόπουλο και δυο χρόνια οι

μαντατοφόροι του πολέμου φέρνανε τα μαντάτα της παλικαριάς του. Χίλιες φορές πήρε φαλάγγι τους εχθρούς του, ποτάμια έχυσε το αίμα τους στη γη. Μα ήταν οι εχθροί ασκέρι και δεν είχανε σωμό. Μα και το βασιλόπουλο με τα παλικάρια του αποσταμό δεν είχε.

Στον καιρό αυτό μεγάλη ταραχή γίνηκε μες στο παλάτι. Η γρηά η βασίλισσα, κυττάζοντας μια μέρα τους θησαυρούς της, έλαβε μεγάλη τρομάρα. Τα μαργαριτάρια της, που άλλα στον κόσμο δε βρισκόντανε, ήτανε χαμένα. Μάταια ψάξανε όλο το παλάτι. Πουθενά δεν εβρεθήκανε.

— Αλλοίμονο! είπε η βασίλισσα. Με τούτα τα μαργαριτάρια, κι' αν οι οχτροί πατήσουνε τη χώρα μας, πάλε μπορούμε να την ξαγοράσουμε. Κι' αν πάρουμε εμείς τον πόλεμο, με τέτοιο πλούτος τόσες κι' άλλες τόσες χώρες αγοράζομε.

Κ' έκλαιγε μοναχή της και φοβότανε να πη το χάσιμό της. Σαν είδε κι' απόειδε ξεμολογήθηκε μια μέρα το χάσιμό της στο βασιλιά,

— Όλα τα κακά μας ήρθαν μαζεμένα στο κεφάλι μας! είπε ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς. Και σα γυρίση με το καλό το βασιλόπουλο και σαν του βάλω την κορώνα με τα χέρια μου, που θενά βρης το τάξιμο που τούταξες για την καινούργια τη βασίλισσα ;

Και τον πήρανε τα δάκρυα.

Έβγαλε προσταγή ο βασιλιάς, άνθρωποι μπιστεμένοι ναπολυθούνε σ' όλο το βασίλειο, να πάρουνε βουνά και λόγγους, να βρούνε το χαμένο θησαυρό.

Καθεμέρα, μαζί με τα μαντάτα του πολέμου, φτάνανε στο παλάτι τα μαντάτα των γυρευτάδων.

— Το βασιλόπουλο νικάει. Στάχτη και μπούρμπερη σκορπίζοντ' οι οχτροί μας.

Λέγανε οι μαντατοφόροι του πολέμου, χαρούμενοι και γελαστοί.

— Χώρες και χωριά γυρίσαμε. Λιθάρι απάνω σε λιθάρι δεν αφήσαμε. Μα ο θησαυρός, αλλοίμονο, δε φάνηκε πουθενά.

Λέγανε οι μαντατοφόροι των γυρευτάδων, χλωμοί και λυπημένοι.

Μεγάλη πίκρα ήτανε χυμένη στο παλάτι. Κ' η γρηά η βασίλισσα απ' το κακό της αρρώστησε και πέθανε. Και κλείνοντας τα μάτια της, έλεγε με παράπονο:

— Αλλοίμονο, παιδί μου, και σα γυρίσης απ' τον πόλεμο και σα σου βάλη ο βασιλέας την κορώνα του, πού θάβρω εγώ το ταξιμο που σούταξα να σου το δώσω; Καλύτερα να κλείσω τα μάπα μου να μην ιδούνε τη ντροπή μου.

Κ' έκλεισε τα μάτια της η βασίλισσα και πέθανε.

Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς έπεσε σε μεγάλη θλίψη.

Ένα πρωί εκεί που ο βασιλιάς μονάχος του έκλαιγε της βασίλισσας το χαμό με τη λαχτάρα του παιδιού του, ένας μαντατοφόρος χύθηκε σαν αστραπή μες στο παλάτι.

— Αφέντη βασιλιά μου, είπε, να! το χάσιμο!

Έβγαλε απ' τον κόρφο του την τραχηλιά με τα μαργαριτάρια και την απίθωσε στα γόνατα του βασιλιά. Κ' ύστερα έπεσε σαν πεθαμένος απ' την κούραση απάνω σ' ένα θρονί.

Το γέρο το βασιλιά τον πήρανε τα κλάματα. Απ' τη χαρά του για το βρέσιμο κι' απ' τη λύπη του, που χάθηκε η βασίλισσα και πήρε τον καϋμό μαζί της. Σα συνέφερε λιγάκι φώναξε σιμά του το μαντατοφόρο και του είπε:

— Γεια σου, άξιο παλικάρι. Κι' ό,τι μου ζητήσεις εσύ και τάλλα παλικάρια, δικό σας να είναι....

Ο μαντατοφόρος πήρε δυο ανάσες κι' άρχισε να ιστορή στο βασιλιά το πώς βρεθήκανε τα μαργαριτάρια της βασίλισσας. Μέσα σ' ένα βαθύ ρουμάνι, εκεί που γυρίζανε απελπισμένοι, οι άνθρωποι του βασιλιά, είδανε μια πιστικιά πούβοςκε τα πρόβατά της. Είχανε χαμένο το δρόμο τους και γυρίζανε νηστικοί και διψασμένοι μέσα στα πυκνά τα δέντρα. Σαν είδανε την πιστικιά ζυγώσανε να τη ρωτήσουν πούθε

βγαίνει ο δρόμος. Αστροπελέκι έπεσε μπροστά τους. Θαμπώσανε τα μάτια τους. Στο λαιμό της πιστικιάς είδανε τα μαργαριτάρια της βασίλισσας. Η κλέφτρα δεν ήθελε να μαρτυρήση. Έλεγε πως τα βρήκε μέσα σε μια ρεματιά, στη ρίζα ενός πλάτανου. Και σαν της πήρανε το θησαυρό άρχισε τα κλάματα και τα παρακαλετά. Τα παλικάρια τότε τη δέσανε πισθάγκωνα μ' ένα λιτάρι και τη φέρανε δέρνοντας στη χώρα. Της μάτωσαν τα κρέατά της στο δρόμο, μα η κλέφτρα δε θέλει να μαρτυρήση.

— Άτιμη γέννα του Σατανά, είπε θυμωμένος ο βασιλιάς. Τα μαργαριτάρια της βασίλισσας ποτέ δε βγήκανε όξω απ' το παλάτι. Ζητιάνα θα χώθηκε η κλέφτρα στο παλάτι, μάγισσα θα μπήκε στο αρχοντικό μου και μούκλεψε το θησαυρό μου.

— Πρόσταξε, βασιλιά μου, να της πάρωμε το κεφάλι! είπε ο μαντατοφόρος.

— Όχι, να μην της πάρετε το κεφάλι, είπε ο βασιλιάς. Στα σίδερα να μείνη νηστική και διψασμένη, μες στη φυλακή. Με σιδερένιες βέργες να τη δέρνουνε και σα ζητάη νερό να ξεδιψάση, ξύδι να την ποτίζουν κι' αψιθιά....

Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς συνέφερε λίγο απ' το κακό του. Έκρυψε βαθιά το θησαυρό του και περίμενε μέρα με την ημέρα τον υγιό του. Και καθεμέρα ρωτούσε για την πιστικιά, μήπως και μαρτύρησε το κλέψιμό της. Μα βέργες σιδερένιες της ματώνανε τα κρέατα, ξύδι κι' αψιθιά τηνέ ποτίζανε, μα το στόμα της — λέγανε οι μαντατοφόροι — μιλιά δεν έβγαλε ακόμα.

Ένα πρωί, χαρά θεού, βούκινα και τούμπανα τράνταξαν τον αέρα. Το βασιλόπουλο γύριζε απ' τον πόλεμο. Στάχτη και μπούρμπερη σκορπίστηκαν οι εχθροί του. Και γύριζε τώρα νικητής στη χώρα τη δική του. Τα βούκινα και τα τούμπανα όλο ζυγώνανε στη χώρα κ' έτρεμε ο αέρας από τη χαρούμενη βοή τους.

Ο γέρος ο βασιλιάς καβάλλησε το πιο όμορφο άλογό του, πήρε και την κορώνα τη χρυσή στα χέρια του και ξεκίνησε απ' το παλάτι. Μπροστά αυτός και πίσω πεζοί και καβαλλάρηδες, τράβηξε μακρυνά κατά το κάστρο, στη μεγάλη τη σιδερόπορτα για να δεχθή το βασιλόπουλο. Έξω απ' το κάστρο αγκαλιαστήκανε ο βασιλιάς με το

παιδί του. Και σαν εφιληθήκανε γλυκά, τούβαλε την κορώνα στο κεφάλι του, καινούργιος βασιλιάς, να περάση τη σιδερόπορτα να μπη στην πολιτεία. Μισοούρανα σηκώθηκε η χαρούμενη χλαλοή των πιστών του. Τούμπανα και βούκινα χαιρετήσανε τον καινούργιο βασιλιά. Και τώρα μπροστά αυτός και πίσω ο γέρος ο πατέρας του με τα δάκρυα στα μάτια, μπήκανε στη μεγάλη πολιτεία.

Χιλιάδες αποπίσω τους ακολουθούσανε. Γέροι εκατόχρονοι κι' αδύνατες γυναίκες, με βυζανιάρικα παιδιά στην αγκαλιά τους, ό,τι είχε μείνει μες στη χώρα απ' τον πόλεμο, ακολουθούσαν αποπίσω, με τα δάκρυα στα μάτια, σα λιτανεία πίσω από θαυματουργήν εικόνα. Κι' ατέλειωτη σειρά κατόπι τασκέρια των πολεμιστάδων, πεζοί και καβαλλάρηδες αμέτρητοι. Ο νέος ο βασιλιάς έμπαινε καβαλλάρης στη χώρα τη δική του.

Σα φτάσανε στο παλάτι, ο νέος ο βασιλιάς ανιστόρησε στο γέρο τον πατέρα του τα βάσανα του πολέμου. Κι' ο γέρος, που τάκουγε δακρύζοντας, ανιστόρησε κι' αυτός τα βάσανα της χώρας, τις συφορές της μοίρας, το χαμό τον άδικο της βασίλισσας και τις λαχτάρες τις δικές του.

— Ένας πόλεμος κ' η ζωή στον κάμπο και στο σπίτι. Κι' άλλος γυρίζει νικητής κι' άλλος νικημένος.

Ύστερα, με τον καιρό, ανιστόρησε ο γέρος στον καινούργιο βασιλιά, το χάσιμο του θησαυρού του, τη λύπη της μητέρας του, τα βάσανά τους, τα καρδιοχτύπια τους, για το τάξιμο, που τούχε τάξει απ' την κούνια του, για να στολίση το λαιμό της νέας βασίλισσας. Ο νέος ο βασιλιάς σαν άκουσε τα λόγια αυτά έγινε χλωμός σα θειαφοκέρι.

— Μη χολοσκάς, παιδί μου, είπε ο γέρος σύνωρα. Έδωκε ο θεός και βρέθηκε το χάσιμο...

Ο νέος ο βασιλιάς έγινε ακόμα πιο χλωμός και τα γόνατά του λυγίσανε να πέση χάμω.

— Βρέθηκε το χάσιμο. Κ' η κλέφτρα η μάγισσα, του Σατανά η γέννα, ρέβει τώρα μες τα σίδερα.

Κρύος ιδρώτας έλουσε το νέο το βασιλιά κ' ένα σκοτάδι απλώθηκε στα μάτια του. Έκανε κουράγιο και είπε στον πατέρα του:

— Πατέρα μου και βασιλιά μου. Σύνωρα τώρα θέλω να ιδώ την κλέφτρα του θησαυρού μας. Κ' ευθύς προστάζω νανοιχθούν οι σιδερόπορτες της φυλακής, να πάω ατός μου μέσα.

Έβαλε μια φωνή κ' ήρθανε μέσα οι πιστοί του βασιλιά, αμέσως δίνει προσταγή να τον ακολουθήσουν, της φυλακής τις πόρτες να του ανοίξουνε.

Τότε ο πρώτος απ' τους πιστούς στάθηκε κ' είπε:

— Άκουσε, αφέντη βασιλιά. Του θησαυρού σου η κλέφτρα μήνες έρρεψε στη φυλακή. Και σήμερα σαν επερνούσε η συνοδεία σου απ' το κάστρο, η κλέφτρα η μάγισσα σκαρφάλωσε στα σίδερα της φυλακής, να ιδή τον βασιλέα που περνούσε. Το κρίμα της την έπνιξε στο λαιμό. Και σα σ' αγνάντεψε στο άλογό σου απάνω, ποιος ξέρει τι της ήρθε. Έβαλε στριγγή φωνή και κάτω από τα σίδερα σωριάστηκε στο χώμα.

Ο νέος ο βασιλιάς τινάχθηκε σα λαβωμένο ζαρκάδι.

— Σύνωρα, είπε, θέλω να την ιδώ!

Άρπαξε το μαργαριταρένιο θησαυρό απ' τη χρυσή τη θήκη κι' αστραπή χύθηκε και βγήκε απ' το παλάτι. Οι πιστοί τον ακολουθήσανε.

Μέσα στο σκοτάδι της φυλακής, απάνω στο μουσκεμένο χώμα, ήτανε ξαπλωμένη, χλωμή σαν θειαφοκέρι, η βοσκοπούλα. Ο Χάρος, κλείνοντάς της τα μάτια, της είχε ξαναδώσει την ομορφιά της και το πρόσωπό της έλαμπε σαν ήλιος μέσα στα σκοτάδια της φυλακής. Οι στρατοκόποι του βασιλιά, ορθοί αποπάνω της, στεκόντανε σα θαμπωμένοι.

Άξαφνα μπήκε μέσα ο νέος ο βασιλιάς. Ένας σεισμός ετάραξε τα φυλλοκάρδια του. Έπεσε απάνω στο άψυχο κορμί και τα μάτια του γενήκανε βρύσες και δεν εστείρευν. Οι πιστοί του βασιλιά σταθήκανε ολόγυρα σαν πετρωμένοι.

Τότε ο νέος ο βασιλιάς ανασηκώθηκε με κόπο. Είχαν ασπρίσει τα

μαλλιά του και το πρόσωπό του φαινότανε πιο γέρικο απ' του γέρου του πατέρα του.

Στάθηκε μια στιγμή σαν αλαφιασμένος, με τα μάτια του ορθάνοιχτα, μαύρα σαν την πίσσα. Έβαλε το χέρι του στον κόρφο, έβγαλε την τραχηλιά με τα μαργαριτάρια και την πέρασε στο λαιμό της πεθαμένης. Το χλωμό της το πρόσωπο άστραψε πάλι σαν τον ήλιο.

Έβαλε τότε μια φωνή ο βασιλιάς, έβαλε μια φωνή που ήτανε σαν κλάμα:

— Πιστοί του βασιλιά! Προσκυνήστε τη βασίλισσά σας....

Οι πιστοί σκύψανε ολόγυρα τα κεφάλια τους.

Τότε μια χαρά χύθηκε ξαφνικά στην όψη του νέου βασιλιά. Έβαλε πάλι το χέρι του στον κόρφο κ' έβγαλε κρυφά ένα χρυσό μαχαίρι. Πριν να προφτάσουν να τον ιδούν τα θαμπωμένα μάτια των πιστών του, τόμπηξε βαθιά στα πονεμένα στήθια του. Έβαλε βαθύν αναστεναγμό και σωριάστηκε απάνω στην αγάπη του.

Πετρωμένοι στάθηκαν γύρω οι πιστοί του. Κι' ο νέος ο βασιλιάς αγκαλιάζοντας σφικτά την καλή του, είπε με σβυσμένη φωνή:

— Πιστοί του βασιλιά! Απάνω στο πιο ψηλό βουνό, μες στα δασά, τα ορμάνια, σκάψτε βαθιά ένα λάκκο. Σκάψτε βαθιά ένα λάκκο και θάψτε μαζί το βασιλιά με τη βασίλισσα.

Κ' έκλεισε τα μάτια του. Και κανένας πια δε χώρισε τον βασιλέα απ' τη βασίλισσα....

Αυτή είναι η θλιβερή η ιστορία της βοσκοπούλας με τα μαργαριτάρια, που μοιάζει σαν παραμύθι και παραμύθι δεν είναι. Ξαπλωμένος στον ήσκιο μιας καρυδιάς, μέσα στην άψη του Θεριστή, την άκουσα βαθιά στο κατάχνιασμά μου. Η φωνή που μου την ανιστόρησε ήτανε γλυκεία, μακρυνή και σβυσμένη. Έτσι έχουνε να πούνε πως οι παλιοί άνθρωποι, που χρόνια τώρα τους έχει φάει το χρώμα, και που μια φορά κ' έναν καιρό περάσανε στον απάνω κόσμο

μεγάλα βάσανα και πάθη, σε αγάπες, σ' έχθρητες και σε πολέμους,
θέλοντας να μη ξεχασθούν τα βάσανά τους, ξαναγυρίζουνε στον κόσμο
κι' ανιστορούνε τη ζωή τους στους αλαφροϊσκιωτους ανθρώπους. Η
φωνή που μου ανιστόρησε κ' εμένα, στον ήσκιο της καρυδιάς, μέσα
στην άψη του Θεριστή, την ιστορία της Βοσκοπούλας με τα
Μαργαριτάρια, ήτανε γλυκειά, μακρυνή και σβυσμένη.



A VENETIAN NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

the Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Descent of Man and Other Stories*, by
Edith Wharton

I

THIS is the story that, in the dining-room of the old Beacon Street house (now the Aldebaran Club), Judge Anthony Bracknell, of the famous East India firm of Bracknell & Saulsbee, when the ladies had withdrawn to the oval parlour (and Maria's harp was throwing its gauzy web of sound across the Common), used to relate to his grandsons, about the year that Buonaparte marched upon Moscow.

I

"Him Venice!" said the Lascar with the big earrings; and Tony Bracknell, leaning on the high gunwale of his father's East Indiaman, the Hepzibah B., saw far off, across the morning sea, a faint vision of towers and domes dissolved in golden air.

It was a rare February day of the year 1760, and a young Tony, newly of age, and bound on the grand tour aboard the crack merchantman of old Bracknell's fleet, felt his heart leap up as the distant city trembled into shape. _Venice!_ The name, since childhood, had been a magician's wand to him. In the hall of the old Bracknell house at Salem there hung

a series of yellowing prints which Uncle Richard Saulsbee had brought home from one of his long voyages: views of heathen mosques and palaces, of the Grand Turk's Seraglio, of St. Peter's Church in Rome; and, in a corner--the corner nearest the rack where the old flintlocks hung--a busy merry populous scene, entitled: _St. Mark's Square in Venice_. This picture, from the first, had singularly taken little Tony's fancy. His unformulated criticism on the others was that they lacked action. True, in the view of St. Peter's an experienced-looking gentleman in a full-bottomed wig was pointing out the fairly obvious monument to a bashful companion, who had presumably not ventured to raise his eyes to it; while, at the doors of the Seraglio, a group of turbaned infidels observed with less hesitancy the approach of a veiled lady on a camel. But in Venice so many things were happening at once--more, Tony was sure, than had ever happened in Boston in a twelve-month or in Salem in a long lifetime. For here, by their garb, were people of every nation on earth, Chinamen, Turks, Spaniards, and many more, mixed with a parti-coloured throng of gentry, lacqueys, chapmen, hucksters, and tall personages in parsons' gowns who stalked through the crowd with an air of mastery, a string of parasites at their heels. And all these people seemed to be diverting themselves hugely, chaffering with the hucksters, watching the antics of trained dogs and monkeys, distributing doles to maimed beggars or having their pockets picked by slippery-looking fellows in black--the whole with such an air of ease and good-humour that one felt the cut-purses to be as much a part of the show as the tumbling acrobats and animals.

As Tony advanced in years and experience this childish mumming lost its magic; but not so the early imaginings it had excited. For the old picture had been but the spring-board of fancy, the first step of a cloud-ladder leading to a land of dreams. With these dreams the name of Venice remained associated; and all that observation or report subsequently brought him concerning the place seemed, on a sober warranty of fact, to confirm its claim to stand midway between reality and illusion. There was, for instance, a slender Venice glass, gold-powdered as with lily-pollen or the dust of sunbeams, that, standing in the corner cabinet betwixt two Lowestoft caddies, seemed, among its lifeless neighbours, to palpitate like an impaled butterfly. There was, farther, a gold chain of his mother's, spun of that same sun-pollen, so thread-like, impalpable, that it slipped through the fingers like light, yet so strong that it carried a heavy pendant which

seemed held in air as if by magic. _Magic!_ That was the word which the thought of Venice evoked. It was the kind of place, Tony felt, in which things elsewhere impossible might naturally happen, in which two and two might make five, a paradox elope with a syllogism, and a conclusion give the lie to its own premiss. Was there ever a young heart that did not, once and again, long to get away into such a world as that? Tony, at least, had felt the longing from the first hour when the axioms in his horn-book had brought home to him his heavy responsibilities as a Christian and a sinner. And now here was his wish taking shape before him, as the distant haze of gold shaped itself into towers and domes across the morning sea!

The Reverend Ozias Mounce, Tony's governor and bear-leader, was just putting a hand to the third clause of the fourth part of a sermon on Free-Will and Predestination as the Hepzibah B.'s anchor rattled overboard. Tony, in his haste to be ashore, would have made one plunge with the anchor; but the Reverend Ozias, on being roused from his lucubrations, earnestly protested against leaving his argument in suspense. What was the trifle of an arrival at some Papistical foreign city, where the very churches wore turbans like so many Moslem idolators, to the important fact of Mr. Mounce's summing up his conclusions before the Muse of Theology took flight? He should be happy, he said, if the tide served, to visit Venice with Mr. Bracknell the next morning.

The next morning, ha!--Tony murmured a submissive "Yes, sir," winked at the subjugated captain, buckled on his sword, pressed his hat down with a flourish, and before the Reverend Ozias had arrived at his next deduction, was skimming merrily shoreward in the Hepzibah's gig.

A moment more and he was in the thick of it! Here was the very world of the old print, only suffused with sunlight and colour, and bubbling with merry noises. What a scene it was! A square enclosed in fantastic painted buildings, and peopled with a throng as fantastic: a bawling, laughing, jostling, sweating mob, parti-coloured, parti-speeched, crackling and sputtering under the hot sun like a dish of fritters over a kitchen fire. Tony, agape, shouldered his way through the press, aware at once that, spite of the tumult, the shrillness, the gesticulation, there was no undercurrent of clownishness, no tendency to horse-play, as in such crowds on market-day at home, but a kind of

facetious suavity which seemed to include everybody in the circumference of one huge joke. In such an air the sense of strangeness soon wore off, and Tony was beginning to feel himself vastly at home, when a lift of the tide bore him against a droll-looking bell-ringing fellow who carried above his head a tall metal tree hung with sherbet-glasses.

The encounter set the glasses spinning and three or four spun off and clattered to the stones. The sherbet-seller called on all the saints, and Tony, clapping a lordly hand to his pocket, tossed him a ducat by mistake for a sequin. The fellow's eyes shot out of their orbits, and just then a personable-looking young man who had observed the transaction stepped up to Tony and said pleasantly, in English:

"I perceive, sir, that you are not familiar with our currency."

"Does he want more?" says Tony, very lordly; whereat the other laughed and replied: "You have given him enough to retire from his business and open a gaming-house over the arcade."

Tony joined in the laugh, and this incident bridging the preliminaries, the two young men were presently hobnobbing over a glass of Canary in front of one of the coffee-houses about the square. Tony counted himself lucky to have run across an English-speaking companion who was good-natured enough to give him a clue to the labyrinth; and when he had paid for the Canary (in the coin his friend selected) they set out again to view the town. The Italian gentleman, who called himself Count Rialto, appeared to have a very numerous acquaintance, and was able to point out to Tony all the chief dignitaries of the state, the men of ton and ladies of fashion, as well as a number of other characters of a kind not openly mentioned in taking a census of Salem.

Tony, who was not averse from reading when nothing better offered, had perused the "Merchant of Venice" and Mr. Otway's fine tragedy; but though these pieces had given him a notion that the social usages of Venice differed from those at home, he was unprepared for the surprising appearance and manners of the great people his friend named to him. The gravest Senators of the Republic went in prodigious striped trousers, short cloaks and feathered hats. One nobleman wore a ruff and doctor's gown, another a black velvet tunic slashed with rose-colour;

while the President of the dreaded Council of Ten was a terrible strutting fellow with a rapier-like nose, a buff leather jerkin and a trailing scarlet cloak that the crowd was careful not to step on.

It was all vastly diverting, and Tony would gladly have gone on forever; but he had given his word to the captain to be at the landing-place at sunset, and here was dusk already creeping over the skies! Tony was a man of honour; and having pressed on the Count a handsome damascened dagger selected from one of the goldsmiths' shops in a narrow street lined with such wares, he insisted on turning his face toward the Hepzibah's gig. The Count yielded reluctantly; but as they came out again on the square they were caught in a great throng pouring toward the doors of the cathedral.

"They go to Benediction," said the Count. "A beautiful sight, with many lights and flowers. It is a pity you cannot take a peep at it."

Tony thought so too, and in another minute a legless beggar had pulled back the leathern flap of the cathedral door, and they stood in a haze of gold and perfume that seemed to rise and fall on the mighty undulations of the organ. Here the press was as thick as without; and as Tony flattened himself against a pillar, he heard a pretty voice at his elbow:--"Oh, sir, oh, sir, your sword!"

He turned at sound of the broken English, and saw a girl who matched the voice trying to disengage her dress from the tip of his scabbard. She wore one of the voluminous black hoods which the Venetian ladies affected, and under its projecting eaves her face spied out at him as sweet as a nesting bird.

In the dusk their hands met over the scabbard, and as she freed herself a shred of her lace flounce clung to Tony's enchanted fingers. Looking after her, he saw she was on the arm of a pompous-looking graybeard in a long black gown and scarlet stockings, who, on perceiving the exchange of glances between the young people, drew the lady away with a threatening look.

The Count met Tony's eye with a smile. "One of our Venetian beauties," said he; "the lovely Polixena Cador. She is thought to have the finest eyes in Venice."

"She spoke English," stammered Tony.

"Oh--ah--precisely: she learned the language at the Court of Saint James's, where her father, the Senator, was formerly accredited as Ambassador. She played as an infant with the royal princes of England."

"And that was her father?"

"Assuredly: young ladies of Donna Polixena's rank do not go abroad save with their parents or a duenna."

Just then a soft hand slid into Tony's. His heart gave a foolish bound, and he turned about half-expecting to meet again the merry eyes under the hood; but saw instead a slender brown boy, in some kind of fanciful page's dress, who thrust a folded paper between his fingers and vanished in the throng. Tony, in a tingle, glanced surreptitiously at the Count, who appeared absorbed in his prayers. The crowd, at the ringing of a bell, had in fact been overswept by a sudden wave of devotion; and Tony seized the moment to step beneath a lighted shrine with his letter.

"I am in dreadful trouble and implore your help. Polixena"--he read; but hardly had he seized the sense of the words when a hand fell on his shoulder, and a stern-looking man in a cocked hat, and bearing a kind of rod or mace, pronounced a few words in Venetian.

Tony, with a start, thrust the letter in his breast, and tried to jerk himself free; but the harder he jerked the tighter grew the other's grip, and the Count, presently perceiving what had happened, pushed his way through the crowd, and whispered hastily to his companion: "For God's sake, make no struggle. This is serious. Keep quiet and do as I tell you."

Tony was no chicken-heart. He had something of a name for pugnacity among the lads of his own age at home, and was not the man to stand in Venice what he would have resented in Salem; but the devil of it was that this black fellow seemed to be pointing to the letter in his breast; and this suspicion was confirmed by the Count's agitated whisper.

"This is one of the agents of the Ten.--For God's sake, no outcry." He exchanged a word or two with the mace-bearer and again turned to Tony. "You have been seen concealing a letter about your person--"

"And what of that?" says Tony furiously.

"Gently, gently, my master. A letter handed to you by the page of Donna Polixena Cador.--A black business! Oh, a very black business! This Cador is one of the most powerful nobles in Venice--I beseech you, not a word, sir! Let me think--deliberate--"

His hand on Tony's shoulder, he carried on a rapid dialogue with the potentate in the cocked hat.

"I am sorry, sir--but our young ladies of rank are as jealously guarded as the Grand Turk's wives, and you must be answerable for this scandal. The best I can do is to have you taken privately to the Palazzo Cador, instead of being brought before the Council. I have pleaded your youth and inexperience"--Tony winced at this--"and I think the business may still be arranged."

Meanwhile the agent of the Ten had yielded his place to a sharp-featured shabby-looking fellow in black, dressed somewhat like a lawyer's clerk, who laid a grimy hand on Tony's arm, and with many apologetic gestures steered him through the crowd to the doors of the church. The Count held him by the other arm, and in this fashion they emerged on the square, which now lay in darkness save for the many lights twinkling under the arcade and in the windows of the gaming-rooms above it.

Tony by this time had regained voice enough to declare that he would go where they pleased, but that he must first say a word to the mate of the Hepzibah, who had now been awaiting him some two hours or more at the landing-place.

The Count repeated this to Tony's custodian, but the latter shook his head and rattled off a sharp denial.

"Impossible, sir," said the Count. "I entreat you not to insist. Any

resistance will tell against you in the end."

Tony fell silent. With a rapid eye he was measuring his chances of escape. In wind and limb he was more than a mate for his captors, and boyhood's ruses were not so far behind him but he felt himself equal to outwitting a dozen grown men; but he had the sense to see that at a cry the crowd would close in on him. Space was what he wanted: a clear ten yards, and he would have laughed at Doge and Council. But the throng was thick as glue, and he walked on submissively, keeping his eye alert for an opening. Suddenly the mob swerved aside after some new show. Tony's fist shot out at the black fellow's chest, and before the latter could right himself the young New Englander was showing a clean pair of heels to his escort. On he sped, cleaving the crowd like a flood-tide in Gloucester bay, diving under the first arch that caught his eye, dashing down a lane to an unlit water-way, and plunging across a narrow hump-back bridge which landed him in a black pocket between walls. But now his pursuers were at his back, reinforced by the yelping mob. The walls were too high to scale, and for all his courage Tony's breath came short as he paced the masonry cage in which ill-luck had landed him. Suddenly a gate opened in one of the walls, and a slip of a servant wench looked out and beckoned him. There was no time to weigh chances. Tony dashed through the gate, his rescuer slammed and bolted it, and the two stood in a narrow paved well between high houses.

II

THE servant picked up a lantern and signed to Tony to follow her. They climbed a squalid stairway of stone, felt their way along a corridor, and entered a tall vaulted room feebly lit by an oil-lamp hung from the painted ceiling. Tony discerned traces of former splendour in his surroundings, but he had no time to examine them, for a figure started up at his approach and in the dim light he recognized the girl who was the cause of all his troubles.

She sprang toward him with outstretched hands, but as he advanced her face changed and she shrank back abashed.

"This is a misunderstanding--a dreadful misunderstanding," she cried out in her pretty broken English. "Oh, how does it happen that you are

here?"

"Through no choice of my own, madam, I assure you!" retorted Tony, not over-pleased by his reception.

"But why--how--how did you make this unfortunate mistake?"

"Why, madam, if you'll excuse my candour, I think the mistake was yours--"

"Mine?"--"in sending me a letter--"

"_You_--a letter?"--"by a simpleton of a lad, who must needs hand it to me under your father's very nose--"

The girl broke in on him with a cry. "What! It was _you_ who received my letter?" She swept round on the little maid-servant and submerged her under a flood of Venetian. The latter volleyed back in the same jargon, and as she did so, Tony's astonished eye detected in her the doubled page who had handed him the letter in Saint Mark's.

"What!" he cried, "the lad was this girl in disguise?"

Polixena broke off with an irrepressible smile; but her face clouded instantly and she returned to the charge.

"This wicked, careless girl--she has ruined me, she will be my undoing! Oh, sir, how can I make you understand? The letter was not intended for you--it was meant for the English Ambassador, an old friend of my mother's, from whom I hoped to obtain assistance--oh, how can I ever excuse myself to you?"

"No excuses are needed, madam," said Tony, bowing; "though I am surprised, I own, that any one should mistake me for an ambassador."

Here a wave of mirth again overran Polixena's face. "Oh, sir, you must pardon my poor girl's mistake. She heard you speaking English, and--and--I had told her to hand the letter to the handsomest foreigner in the church." Tony bowed again, more profoundly. "The English Ambassador," Polixena added simply, "is a very handsome man."

"I wish, madam, I were a better proxy!"

She echoed his laugh, and then clapped her hands together with a look of anguish. "Fool that I am! How can I jest at such a moment? I am in dreadful trouble, and now perhaps I have brought trouble on you also--Oh, my father! I hear my father coming!" She turned pale and leaned tremblingly upon the little servant.

Footsteps and loud voices were in fact heard outside, and a moment later the red-stockinged Senator stalked into the room attended by half-a-dozen of the magnificoes whom Tony had seen abroad in the square. At sight of him, all clapped hands to their swords and burst into furious outcries; and though their jargon was unintelligible to the young man, their tones and gestures made their meaning unpleasantly plain. The Senator, with a start of anger, first flung himself on the intruder; then, snatched back by his companions, turned wrathfully on his daughter, who, at his feet, with outstretched arms and streaming face, pleaded her cause with all the eloquence of young distress. Meanwhile the other nobles gesticulated vehemently among themselves, and one, a truculent-looking personage in ruff and Spanish cape, stalked apart, keeping a jealous eye on Tony. The latter was at his wit's end how to comport himself, for the lovely Polixena's tears had quite drowned her few words of English, and beyond guessing that the magnificoes meant him a mischief he had no notion what they would be at.

At this point, luckily, his friend Count Rialto suddenly broke in on the scene, and was at once assailed by all the tongues in the room. He pulled a long face at sight of Tony, but signed to the young man to be silent, and addressed himself earnestly to the Senator. The latter, at first, would not draw breath to hear him; but presently, sobering, he walked apart with the Count, and the two conversed together out of earshot.

"My dear sir," said the Count, at length turning to Tony with a perturbed countenance, "it is as I feared, and you are fallen into a great misfortune."

"A great misfortune! A great trap, I call it!" shouted Tony, whose blood, by this time, was boiling; but as he uttered the word the

beautiful Polixena cast such a stricken look on him that he blushed up to the forehead.

"Be careful," said the Count, in a low tone. "Though his Illustriousness does not speak your language, he understands a few words of it, and--"

"So much the better!" broke in Tony; "I hope he will understand me if I ask him in plain English what is his grievance against me."

The Senator, at this, would have burst forth again; but the Count, stepping between, answered quickly: "His grievance against you is that you have been detected in secret correspondence with his daughter, the most noble Polixena Cador, the betrothed bride of this gentleman, the most illustrious Marquess Zanipolo--" and he waved a deferential hand at the frowning hidalgo of the cape and ruff.

"Sir," said Tony, "if that is the extent of my offence, it lies with the young lady to set me free, since by her own avowal--" but here he stopped short, for, to his surprise, Polixena shot a terrified glance at him.

"Sir," interposed the Count, "we are not accustomed in Venice to take shelter behind a lady's reputation."

"No more are we in Salem," retorted Tony in a white heat. "I was merely about to remark that, by the young lady's avowal, she has never seen me before."

Polixena's eyes signalled her gratitude, and he felt he would have died to defend her.

The Count translated his statement, and presently pursued: "His Illustriousness observes that, in that case, his daughter's misconduct has been all the more reprehensible."

"Her misconduct? Of what does he accuse her?"

"Of sending you, just now, in the church of Saint Mark's, a letter which you were seen to read openly and thrust in your bosom. The

incident was witnessed by his Illustriousness the Marquess Zanipolo, who, in consequence, has already repudiated his unhappy bride."

Tony stared contemptuously at the black Marquess. "If his Illustriousness is so lacking in gallantry as to repudiate a lady on so trivial a pretext, it is he and not I who should be the object of her father's resentment."

"That, my dear young gentleman, is hardly for you to decide. Your only excuse being your ignorance of our customs, it is scarcely for you to advise us how to behave in matters of punctilio."

It seemed to Tony as though the Count were going over to his enemies, and the thought sharpened his retort.

"I had supposed," said he, "that men of sense had much the same behaviour in all countries, and that, here as elsewhere, a gentleman would be taken at his word. I solemnly affirm that the letter I was seen to read reflects in no way on the honour of this young lady, and has in fact nothing to do with what you suppose."

As he had himself no notion what the letter was about, this was as far as he dared commit himself.

There was another brief consultation in the opposing camp, and the Count then said:--"We all know, sir, that a gentleman is obliged to meet certain enquiries by a denial; but you have at your command the means of immediately clearing the lady. Will you show the letter to her father?"

There was a perceptible pause, during which Tony, while appearing to look straight before him, managed to deflect an interrogatory glance toward Polixena. Her reply was a faint negative motion, accompanied by unmistakable signs of apprehension.

"Poor girl!" he thought, "she is in a worse case than I imagined, and whatever happens I must keep her secret."

He turned to the Senator with a deep bow. "I am not," said he, "in the habit of showing my private correspondence to strangers."

The Count interpreted these words, and Donna Polixena's father, dashing his hand on his hilt, broke into furious invective, while the Marquess continued to nurse his outraged feelings aloof.

The Count shook his head funereally. "Alas, sir, it is as I feared. This is not the first time that youth and propinquity have led to fatal imprudence. But I need hardly, I suppose, point out the obligation incumbent upon you as a man of honour."

Tony stared at him haughtily, with a look which was meant for the Marquess. "And what obligation is that?"

"To repair the wrong you have done--in other words, to marry the lady."

Polixena at this burst into tears, and Tony said to himself: "Why in heaven does she not bid me show the letter?" Then he remembered that it had no superscription, and that the words it contained, supposing them to have been addressed to himself, were hardly of a nature to disarm suspicion. The sense of the girl's grave plight effaced all thought of his own risk, but the Count's last words struck him as so preposterous that he could not repress a smile.

"I cannot flatter myself," said he, "that the lady would welcome this solution."

The Count's manner became increasingly ceremonious. "Such modesty," he said, "becomes your youth and inexperience; but even if it were justified it would scarcely alter the case, as it is always assumed in this country that a young lady wishes to marry the man whom her father has selected."

"But I understood just now," Tony interposed, "that the gentleman yonder was in that enviable position."

"So he was, till circumstances obliged him to waive the privilege in your favour."

"He does me too much honour; but if a deep sense of my unworthiness obliges me to decline--"

"You are still," interrupted the Count, "labouring under a misapprehension. Your choice in the matter is no more to be consulted than the lady's. Not to put too fine a point on it, it is necessary that you should marry her within the hour."

Tony, at this, for all his spirit, felt the blood run thin in his veins. He looked in silence at the threatening visages between himself and the door, stole a side-glance at the high barred windows of the apartment, and then turned to Polixena, who had fallen sobbing at her father's feet.

"And if I refuse?" said he.

The Count made a significant gesture. "I am not so foolish as to threaten a man of your mettle. But perhaps you are unaware what the consequences would be to the lady."

Polixena, at this, struggling to her feet, addressed a few impassioned words to the Count and her father; but the latter put her aside with an obdurate gesture.

The Count turned to Tony. "The lady herself pleads for you--at what cost you do not guess--but as you see it is vain. In an hour his Illustriousness's chaplain will be here. Meanwhile his Illustriousness consents to leave you in the custody of your betrothed."

He stepped back, and the other gentlemen, bowing with deep ceremony to Tony, stalked out one by one from the room. Tony heard the key turn in the lock, and found himself alone with Polixena.

III

THE girl had sunk into a chair, her face hidden, a picture of shame and agony. So moving was the sight that Tony once again forgot his own extremity in the view of her distress. He went and kneeled beside her, drawing her hands from her face.

"Oh, don't make me look at you!" she sobbed; but it was on his bosom

that she hid from his gaze. He held her there a breathing-space, as he might have clasped a weeping child; then she drew back and put him gently from her.

"What humiliation!" she lamented.

"Do you think I blame you for what has happened?"

"Alas, was it not my foolish letter that brought you to this plight? And how nobly you defended me! How generous it was of you not to show the letter! If my father knew I had written to the Ambassador to save me from this dreadful marriage his anger against me would be even greater."

"Ah--it was that you wrote for?" cried Tony with unaccountable relief.

"Of course--what else did you think?"

"But is it too late for the Ambassador to save you?"

"From _you?_" A smile flashed through her tears. "Alas, yes." She drew back and hid her face again, as though overcome by a fresh wave of shame.

Tony glanced about him. "If I could wrench a bar out of that window--" he muttered.

"Impossible! The court is guarded. You are a prisoner, alas.--Oh, I must speak!" She sprang up and paced the room. "But indeed you can scarce think worse of me than you do already--"

"I think ill of you?"

"Alas, you must! To be unwilling to marry the man my father has chosen for me--"

"Such a beetle-browed lout! It would be a burning shame if you married him."

"Ah, you come from a free country. Here a girl is allowed no choice."

"It is infamous, I say--infamous!"

"No, no--I ought to have resigned myself, like so many others."

"Resigned yourself to that brute! Impossible!"

"He has a dreadful name for violence--his gondolier has told my little maid such tales of him! But why do I talk of myself, when it is of you I should be thinking?"

"Of me, poor child?" cried Tony, losing his head.

"Yes, and how to save you--for I can save you! But every moment counts--and yet what I have to say is so dreadful."

"Nothing from your lips could seem dreadful."

"Ah, if he had had your way of speaking!"

"Well, now at least you are free of him," said Tony, a little wildly; but at this she stood up and bent a grave look on him.

"No, I am not free," she said; "but you are, if you will do as I tell you."

Tony, at this, felt a sudden dizziness; as though, from a mad flight through clouds and darkness, he had dropped to safety again, and the fall had stunned him.

"What am I to do?" he said.

"Look away from me, or I can never tell you."

He thought at first that this was a jest, but her eyes commanded him, and reluctantly he walked away and leaned in the embrasure of the window. She stood in the middle of the room, and as soon as his back was turned she began to speak in a quick monotonous voice, as though she were reciting a lesson.

"You must know that the Marquess Zanipolo, though a great noble, is not a rich man. True, he has large estates, but he is a desperate spendthrift and gambler, and would sell his soul for a round sum of ready money.--If you turn round I shall not go on!--He wrangled horribly with my father over my dowry--he wanted me to have more than either of my sisters, though one married a Procurator and the other a grandee of Spain. But my father is a gambler too--oh, such fortunes as are squandered over the arcade yonder! And so--and so--don't turn, I implore you--oh, do you begin to see my meaning?"

She broke off sobbing, and it took all his strength to keep his eyes from her.

"Go on," he said.

"Will you not understand? Oh, I would say anything to save you! You don't know us Venetians--we're all to be bought for a price. It is not only the brides who are marketable--sometimes the husbands sell themselves too. And they think you rich--my father does, and the others--I don't know why, unless you have shown your money too freely--and the English are all rich, are they not? And--oh, oh--do you understand? Oh, I can't bear your eyes!"

She dropped into a chair, her head on her arms, and Tony in a flash was at her side.

"My poor child, my poor Polixena!" he cried, and wept and clasped her.

"You are rich, are you not? You would promise them a ransom?" she persisted.

"To enable you to marry the Marquess?"

"To enable you to escape from this place. Oh, I hope I may never see your face again." She fell to weeping once more, and he drew away and paced the floor in a fever.

Presently she sprang up with a fresh air of resolution, and pointed to a clock against the wall. "The hour is nearly over. It is quite true that my father is gone to fetch his chaplain. Oh, I implore you, be

warned by me! There is no other way of escape."

"And if I do as you say--?"

"You are safe! You are free! I stake my life on it."

"And you--you are married to that villain?"

"But I shall have saved you. Tell me your name, that I may say it to myself when I am alone."

"My name is Anthony. But you must not marry that fellow."

"You forgive me, Anthony? You don't think too badly of me?"

"I say you must not marry that fellow."

She laid a trembling hand on his arm. "Time presses," she adjured him, "and I warn you there is no other way."

For a moment he had a vision of his mother, sitting very upright, on a Sunday evening, reading Dr. Tillotson's sermons in the best parlour at Salem; then he swung round on the girl and caught both her hands in his. "Yes, there is," he cried, "if you are willing. Polixena, let the priest come!"

She shrank back from him, white and radiant. "Oh, hush, be silent!" she said.

"I am no noble Marquess, and have no great estates," he cried. "My father is a plain India merchant in the colony of Massachusetts--but if you--"

"Oh, hush, I say! I don't know what your long words mean. But I bless you, bless you, bless you on my knees!" And she knelt before him, and fell to kissing his hands.

He drew her up to his breast and held her there.

"You are willing, Polixena?" he said.

"No, no!" She broke from him with outstretched hands. "I am not willing. You mistake me. I must marry the Marquess, I tell you!"

"On my money?" he taunted her; and her burning blush rebuked him.

"Yes, on your money," she said sadly.

"Why? Because, much as you hate him, you hate me still more?"

She was silent.

"If you hate me, why do you sacrifice yourself for me?" he persisted.

"You torture me! And I tell you the hour is past."

"Let it pass. I'll not accept your sacrifice. I will not lift a finger to help another man to marry you."

"Oh, madman, madman!" she murmured.

Tony, with crossed arms, faced her squarely, and she leaned against the wall a few feet off from him. Her breast throbbed under its lace and falbalas, and her eyes swam with terror and entreaty.

"Polixena, I love you!" he cried.

A blush swept over her throat and bosom, bathing her in light to the verge of her troubled brows.

"I love you! I love you!" he repeated.

And now she was on his breast again, and all their youth was in their lips. But her embrace was as fleeting as a bird's poise and before he knew it he clasped empty air, and half the room was between them.

She was holding up a little coral charm and laughing. "I took it from your fob," she said. "It is of no value, is it? And I shall not get any of the money, you know."

She continued to laugh strangely, and the rouge burned like fire in her ashen face.

"What are you talking of?" he said.

"They never give me anything but the clothes I wear. And I shall never see you again, Anthony!" She gave him a dreadful look. "Oh, my poor boy, my poor love--' _I love you, I love you, Polixena! _'"

He thought she had turned light-headed, and advanced to her with soothing words; but she held him quietly at arm's length, and as he gazed he read the truth in her face.

He fell back from her, and a sob broke from him as he bowed his head on his hands.

"Only, for God's sake, have the money ready, or there may be foul play here," she said.

As she spoke there was a great tramping of steps outside and a burst of voices on the threshold.

"It is all a lie," she gasped out, "about my marriage, and the Marquess, and the Ambassador, and the Senator--but not, oh, not about your danger in this place--or about my love," she breathed to him. And as the key rattled in the door she laid her lips on his brow.

The key rattled, and the door swung open--but the black-cassocked gentleman who stepped in, though a priest indeed, was no votary of idolatrous rites, but that sound orthodox divine, the Reverend Ozias Mounce, looking very much perturbed at his surroundings, and very much on the alert for the Scarlet Woman. He was supported, to his evident relief, by the captain of the Hepzibah B., and the procession was closed by an escort of stern-looking fellows in cocked hats and small-swords, who led between them Tony's late friends the magnificoes, now as sorry a looking company as the law ever landed in her net.

The captain strode briskly into the room, uttering a grunt of satisfaction as he clapped eyes on Tony.

"So, Mr. Bracknell," said he, "you have been seeing the Carnival with this pack of mummers, have you? And this is where your pleasuring has landed you? H'm--a pretty establishment, and a pretty lady at the head of it." He glanced about the apartment and doffed his hat with mock ceremony to Polixena, who faced him like a princess.

"Why, my girl," said he, amicably, "I think I saw you this morning in the square, on the arm of the Pantaloon yonder; and as for that Captain Spavent--" and he pointed a derisive finger at the Marquess--"I've watched him drive his bully's trade under the arcade ever since I first dropped anchor in these waters. Well, well," he continued, his indignation subsiding, "all's fair in Carnival, I suppose, but this gentleman here is under sailing orders, and I fear we must break up your little party."

At this Tony saw Count Rialto step forward, looking very small and explanatory, and uncovering obsequiously to the captain.

"I can assure you, sir," said the Count in his best English, "that this incident is the result of an unfortunate misunderstanding, and if you will oblige us by dismissing these myrmidons, any of my friends here will be happy to offer satisfaction to Mr. Bracknell and his companions."

Mr. Mounce shrank visibly at this, and the captain burst into a loud guffaw.

"Satisfaction?" says he. "Why, my cock, that's very handsome of you, considering the rope's at your throats. But we'll not take advantage of your generosity, for I fear Mr. Bracknell has already trespassed on it too long. You pack of galley-slaves, you!" he spluttered suddenly, "decoying young innocents with that devil's bait of yours--" His eye fell on Polixena, and his voice softened unaccountably. "Ah, well, we must all see the Carnival once, I suppose," he said. "All's well that ends well, as the fellow says in the play; and now, if you please, Mr. Bracknell, if you'll take the reverend gentleman's arm there, we'll bid adieu to our hospitable entertainers, and right about face for the Hepzibah."



THE NAPOLEONIC ERA (1789-1820)

Project Gutenberg's *A Short History of Italy*, by Henry Dwight Sedgwick

Now come those great events, most important to Italy, the French Revolution and the invasion by Napoleon. The storm burst upon a scene of quiet. Italy was still like a comedy of Goldoni, dukes enjoying taxes and mistresses, priests accepting oblations and snuff, nobles sipping chocolate and pocketing rent, while the poor peasants, kept behind the scenes, sweated and toiled for a bare subsistence.

Before the Revolution came the premonitory breezes of philosophical philanthropy wafted across the Alps from the Encyclopedists. As they affected the various rulers differently, it is necessary to descend to some particulars. In Piedmont no philosophical philanthropy warmed the king; he wrapped his cloak tighter about him, and deemed the old ways good enough. He maintained his court in imitation of Versailles, and drilled his soldiers in imitation of Frederick the Great. Nobles alone were employed in the higher ranks of the civil service, nobles alone were made officers in the army; in return, they were treated like schoolboys, not allowed to leave a prescribed path without permission. The clergy had the privileges of the old régime; their tribunals had sole jurisdiction over priests, and tried to maintain jurisdiction over the laity for all offences that had a smack of sin. King, nobility, and clergy clung to the autocracy, and were resolved to maintain it in full vigour. A rash admirer of Montesquieu wrote a treatise upon "Constitutional Monarchy," and was put in prison.

In Lombardy the House of Austria really plunged into reform; it reorganized the administration, reapportioned taxes, curtailed clerical privileges, abolished the Inquisition, improved roads, favoured agriculture, stimulated trade, and encouraged manufacture. New ideas were broached. Beccaria published his famous book "On Crimes and

Punishments," which began the attack on the atrocious, old penal cruelties. French philosophy was discussed. The physicist Volta, famous for his electrical discoveries, occupied a chair in the university at Pavia. Austrian garrisons indeed were on duty, but Lombardy prospered as it had not done since the days of the Sforzas.

In Venice the new ideas did not affect the government. The old system continued. The Great Council of Patricians sat in conservative indolence; the ornamental Doge shuffled about, the Senate talked, and the Council of Ten maintained its petty despotism. Venice was moribund. Her voice was no more heard in European affairs. Her army had dwindled to a few undisciplined and inefficient regiments; her arsenal was little employed. Gayety, luxury, vice, reigned triumphant; all the young blades of Europe went thither to carouse.

In Parma the flood of philanthropic reform had flowed strong; the minister of state, a Frenchman, full of Parisian ideas, had introduced many beneficial changes, but a new duke, dissipated and devout, slipped back into the old ways; and its little neighbour, Modena, concentrated its attention on avoidance of all possible offence to its neighbours.

In Tuscany, an appanage of Austria, reform bounded along. The Grand Duke, Leopold I, proposed to destroy every remnant of the Middle Ages; he attacked the power of the ubiquitous priests, granted free trade in grain, and equalized taxes,--without discrimination even in favour of his own estates. He improved the universities of Pisa and Siena, drained the marshes of the Maremma, and led the way in abolishing torture and capital punishment; he rendered a public account of the state's revenues; and, in short, put in practice the advanced philanthropic ideas on government.

In the Papal States, on the other hand, mediævalism lay heavy. There was no commerce, no manufacture, little agriculture. Priests were everywhere, greedy relations of the Pope almost everywhere. No laymen were given office. Ancona, a seaport, and Bologna, with its university, were the only exceptions to general wretchedness. The finances were in extreme confusion; the offerings of the faithful, the sale of offices, the multiplication of taxes, did little more than pay interest on the bonded debts. Rome was a little, unimportant, ecclesiastical city.

In Naples, however, even the Bourbons felt the fresh breath of reformation. A reforming minister expelled the Jesuits and tried to reduce the number of superfluous priests, monks, and nuns, and to root out the old feudal privileges. In the city itself a goodly company of men gathered together, cultivated ideas, and followed the lead of the French philosophers. Poor Sicily, overridden by barons and priests, lagged behind, a prey to the feudal system, and so unsusceptible to new ideas that the reforming prime minister could not budge the dead weight of custom. The people preferred to help one another in their own way, and resorted to that mysterious society, the _Mafia_.

Thus was Italy, half philanthropically inclined, half despotically, with few outward indications of the great awakening of the nineteenth century. One such indication might have been found in the life and character of a gentleman of Turin. Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) was a kind of antique Roman, a new Brutus, of passionate and lofty nature. He embodied his ideas of liberty in classic tragedies, which stirred Italian manhood in those days, but now are extremely tedious to read. He boldly gave vent to his hatred of foreign oppression, preached freedom, and appealed to the "future Italian people." His autobiography, somewhat condensed and expurgated, might be put into Plutarch. He stands in history, not as a great tragedian, but as the first example of the rebirth of that antique virility which was to display itself so brilliantly in the nineteenth century.

Down into this little world of periwigs and lavender came the French Revolution. All who had applauded Alfieri's tragedies were delighted, except Alfieri himself, who hated the French. But the Italian princes took fright at the democratic volcano, and talked of a general union against France. Piedmont alone was vigorous enough to take action; she made a league with Austria (1792). Nothing important happened until young Napoleon took command of the French army of invasion (1796), and began to tear "the heart out of Glory." It would be useless to relate in detail his wonderful career in Italy. He arranged the peninsula as a housekeeper shifts the furniture in an unsatisfactory room. He took Nice and Savoy from Piedmont, Lombardy from Austria, formed the little states south of the Po into a republic, took the temporal power from the Pope, and set up a Roman Republic. He turned the Kingdom of Naples into a republic and then back again into a kingdom, first for his brother Joseph, and then for his general, Murat (1808). He converted Genoa into

the Republic of Liguria. Venice, like old Priam before bloody Pyrrhus, fell at the whiff and wind of the victor's sword; the Great Council resigned without a struggle, and the Republic of St. Mark after an existence of a thousand years came to its end. It was then handed over to Austria, but after Austerlitz taken back again. In 1805, having become Emperor, Napoleon turned the northern part of the peninsula into the Kingdom of Italy, and put the iron crown of Lombardy on his own head, saying, "God has given it to me, woe to him that touches it." In 1806 he put an end to the Holy Roman Empire, and forced the Emperor, Francis II, to resign the Imperial crown.

The old laws of political gravitation ceased to act, and Italy was moulded and broken and moulded anew, as if creation had begun again. The revolutionary ideas on which Napoleon's power at first rested had spread everywhere; liberty, equality, democracy were a part of every man's stock of familiar thoughts, and the conception of an Italian kingdom, vaguely associated with the poetic dreams of Dante, Petrarch, Machiavelli, had become a political fact. Italy was changed forever, the old Goldoni comedy was gone; Napoleon had given the *coup de grâce* to the old régime.

There was another side to the Napoleonic domination. A multitude of men had been forcibly enlisted in Napoleon's armies; twenty-six thousand, it is said, perished in the terrible retreat from Moscow. The French were arrogant and they were foreigners. Changes had been made too quickly and with too reckless a disregard for Italian wishes. Nobles and clergy had been despoiled of privileges, peasants had been confused and bewildered, the pious had been scandalized by Napoleon's treatment of the Pope; all these longed for the restoration of the old political divisions and of the old easy ways.

After Napoleon's overthrow the Napoleonic states in Italy fell almost immediately. The viceroy of the Italian kingdom, Napoleon's stepson Eugène Beauharnais, slunk away; and in the south, after some vicissitudes, Murat was caught and shot (1815). Kings, dukes, and Pope came tripping back to their thrones. The Congress of Vienna decided that the doctrines of the French Revolution were quite wrong, that law, order, and the principle of legitimacy were bound up together, that states belonged to their royal families in tail male, and reparcelled Italy among its petty sovereigns, acting quite as despotically as

Napoleon had done. It gave Venice to Austria, Genoa to Piedmont, and Parma to Marie Louise, the Austrian wife of Napoleon, for her life, as she had to be decently provided for. The Dukes of Parma received Lucca until her death, when they were to return to Parma, and then Lucca was to be annexed to Tuscany. Metternich, Hardenberg, Castlereagh, Talleyrand, and their associates complimented one another on the happy completion of their task, and the Congress broke up.

In Piedmont the king, loyally welcomed home, put back everything to the position in which it was before the disturbances; the old dispossessed nobles were restored to their places in the civil and military service, and the *_carrière ouverte aux talents_* was closed. In Lombardy and Venice Austrian officials held a tight rein, and a watchful secret service (*_sbirri_*) prowled about ready to pounce on plotting youth like owls upon field mice. In Parma and Modena the eye of the Austrian government was always peering and peeping. In Tuscany Austrian influence also was dominant; but the Grand Duke was a gentle, kindly, paternal person, and his subjects were placidly content, for the old Tuscan fire had died out, and no Tuscan was so crazy as to dream of revolution or of a united Italy. In the Papal States the reaction was complete; the Inquisition was restored, the Jesuits recalled, the civil service limited to priests. But in Naples the reaction was worst. The despicable Ferdinand, who dropped his number IV of Naples to become Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies, restored the old régime, and swept away the autonomy of Sicily, which had had a separate parliament for hundreds of years, and since 1812 a constitution also. Ferdinand humbly followed every hint from Austria. The will of Austria was supreme from Venice to Naples, and behind Austria was the conservative judgment of the ruling classes of all Europe, still frightened by the Revolution. European nobles and landowners agreed that the riotous desires of the middle class and proletariat for political privileges must be crushed down.



THE RICCARDI PALACE AND THE MEDICI

The Project Gutenberg EBook of A Wanderer in Florence, by E. V. Lucas

An evasion of history--"Il Caparra"--The Gozzoli frescoes--Giovanni de' Medici (di Bicci)--Cosimo de' Medici--The first banishment--Piero de' Medici--Lorenzo de' Medici--Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici--The second banishment--Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici--Leo X--Lorenzo di Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici--Clement VII--Third banishment of the Medici--The siege of Florence--Alessandro de' Medici--Ippolito de' Medici--Lorenzino de' Medici--Giovanni delle Bande Nere--Cosimo I--The Grand Dukes.

The natural step from the Baptistery would be to the Uffizi. But for us not yet; because in order to understand Florence, and particularly the Florence that existed between the extreme dates that I have chosen as containing the fascinating period--namely 1296, when the Duomo was begun, and 1564, when Michelangelo died--one must understand who and what the Medici were.

While I have been enjoying the pleasant task of writing this book--which has been more agreeable than any literary work I have ever done--I have continually been conscious of a plaintive voice at my shoulder, proceeding from one of the vigilant and embarrassing imps who sit there and do duty as conscience, inquiring if the time is not about ripe for introducing that historical sketch of Florence without which no account such as this can be rightly understood. And ever I have replied with words of a soothing and procrastinating nature. But now that we are face to face with the Medici family, in their very house, I am conscious that the occasion for that historical sketch is here indeed, and equally I am conscious of being quite incapable of supplying it. For the history of Florence between, say the birth of Giotto or Dante and the return of Cosimo de' Medici from exile, when the absolute Medici rule began, is so turbulent, crowded, and complex that it would require the whole of this volume to describe it. The changes in the government of the city would alone occupy a good third, so constant and complicated were they. I should have to explain the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, the Neri and the Bianchi,

the Guilds and the Priors, the gonfalonieri and the podesta, the secondo popolo and the buonuomini.

Rather than do this imperfectly I have chosen to do it not at all; and the curious must resort to historians proper. But there is at the end of the volume a table of the chief dates in Florentine and European history in the period chosen, together with births and deaths of artists and poets and other important persons, so that a bird's-eye view of the progress of affairs can be quickly gained, while in this chapter I offer an outline of the great family of rulers of Florence who made the little city an aesthetic lawgiver to the world and with whom her later fame, good or ill, is indissolubly united. For the rest, is there not the library?

The Medici, once so powerful and stimulating, are still ever in the background of Florence as one wanders hither and thither. They are behind many of the best pictures and most of the best statues. Their escutcheon is everywhere. I ought, I believe, to have made them the subject of my first chapter. But since I did not, let us without further delay turn to the Via Cavour, which runs away to the north from the Baptistery, being a continuation of the Via de' Martelli, and pause at the massive and dignified palace at the first corner on the left. For that is the Medici's home; and afterwards we will step into S. Lorenzo and see the church which Brunelleschi and Donatello made beautiful and Michelangelo wonderful that the Medici might lie there.

Visitors go to the Riccardi palace rather to see Gozzoli's frescoes than anything else; and indeed apart from the noble solid Renaissance architecture of Michelozzo there is not much else to see. In the courtyard are certain fragments of antique sculpture arranged against the walls, and a sarcophagus is shown in which an early member of the family, Guccio de' Medici, who was gonfalonier in 1299, once reposed. There too are Donatello's eight medallions, but they are not very interesting, being only enlarged copies of old medals and cameos and not notable for his own characteristics.

Hence it is that, after Gozzoli, by far the most interesting part of this building is its associations. For here lived Cosimo de' Medici, whose building of the palace was interrupted by his banishment as a citizen of dangerous ambition; here lived Piero

de' Medici, for whom Gozzoli worked; here was born and here lived Lorenzo the Magnificent. To this palace came the Pazzi conspirators to lure Giuliano to the Duomo and his doom. Here did Charles VIII--Savonarola's "Flagellum Dei"--lodge and loot, and it was here that Capponi frightened him with the threat of the Florentine bells; hither came in 1494 the fickle and terrible Florentine mob, always passionate in its pursuit of change and excitement, and now inflamed by the sermons of Savonarola, to destroy the priceless manuscripts and works of art; here was brought up for a year or so the little Catherine de' Medici, and next door was the house in which Alessandro de' Medici was murdered.

It was in the seventeenth century that the palace passed to the Riccardi family, who made many additions. A century later Florence acquired it, and to-day it is the seat of the Prefect of the city. Cosimo's original building was smaller; but much of it remains untouched. The exquisite cornice is Michelozzo's original, and the courtyard has merely lost its statues, among which are Donatello's Judith, now in the Loggia de' Lanzi, and his bronze David, now in the Bargello, while Verrocchio's David was probably on the stairs. The escutcheon on the corner of the house gives us the period of its erection. The seven plain balls proclaim it Cosimo's. Each of the Medici sported these palle, although each had also his private crest. Under Giovanni, Cosimo's father, the balls were eight in number; under Cosimo, seven; under Piero, seven, with the fleur-de-lis of France on the uppermost, given him by Louis XI; under Lorenzo, six; and as one walks about Florence one can approximately fix the date of a building by remembering these changes. How many times they occur on the façades of Florence and its vicinity, probably no one could say; but they are everywhere. The French wits, who were amused to derive Catherine de' Medici from a family of apothecaries, called them pills.

The beautiful lantern at the corner was added by Lorenzo and was the work of an odd ironsmith in Florence for whom he had a great liking--Niccolò Grosso. For Lorenzo had all that delight in character which belongs so often to the born patron and usually to the born connoisseur. This Grosso was a man of humorous independence and bluntness. He had the admirable custom of carrying out his commissions in the order in which they arrived, so that if he was at work upon a set of fire-irons for a poor client, not even Lorenzo himself (who as

a matter of fact often tried) could induce him to turn to something more lucrative. The rich who cannot wait he forced to wait. Grosso also always insisted upon something in advance and payment on delivery, and pleasantly described his workshop as being the Sign of the Burning Books,--since if his books were burnt how could he enter a debt? This rule earned for him from Lorenzo the nickname of "Il Caparra" (earnest money). Another of Grosso's eccentricities was to refuse to work for Jews.

Within the palace, up stairs, is the little chapel which Gozzoli made so gay and fascinating that it is probably the very gem among the private chapels of the world. Here not only did the Medici perform their devotions--Lorenzo's corner seat is still shown, and anyone may sit in it--but their splendour and taste are reflected on the walls. Cosimo, as we shall see when we reach S. Marco, invited Fra Angelico to paint upon the walls of that convent sweet and simple frescoes to the glory of God. Piero employed Fra Angelico's pupil, Benozzo Gozzoli to decorate this chapel.

In the year 1439, as chapter II related, through the instrumentality of Cosimo a great episcopal Council was held at Florence, at which John Palaeologus, Emperor of the East, met Pope Eugenius IV. In that year Cosimo's son Piero was twenty-three, and Gozzoli nineteen, and probably upon both, but certainly on the young artist, such pomp and splendour and gorgeousness of costume as then were visible in Florence made a deep impression. When therefore Piero, after becoming head of the family, decided to decorate the chapel with a procession of Magi, it is not surprising that the painter should recall this historic occasion. We thus get the pageantry of the East with more than common realism, while the portraits, or at any rate representations, of the Patriarch of Constantinople (the first king) and the Emperor (the second king) are here, together with those of certain Medici, for the youthful third king is none other than Piero's eldest son Lorenzo. Among their followers are (the third on the left) Cosimo de' Medici, who is included as among the living, although, like the Patriarch of Constantinople, he was dead, and his brother Lorenzo (the middle one of the three), whose existence is forgotten so completely until the accession of Cosimo I, in 1537, brings his branch of the family into power; while on the right is Piero de' Medici himself. Piero's second son Giuliano is on the white horse,

preceded by a negro carrying his bow. The head immediately above Giuliano I do not know, but that one a little to the left above it is Gozzoli's own. Among the throng are men of learning who either came to Florence from the East or Florentines who assimilated their philosophy--such as Georgius Gemisthos, Marsilio Ficino, and perhaps certain painters among them, all protégés of Cosimo and Piero, and all makers of the Renaissance.

The assemblage alone, apart altogether from any beauty and charm that the painting possesses, makes these frescoes valuable. But the painting is a delight. We have a pretty Gozzoli in our National Gallery--No. 283--but it gives no indication of the ripeness and richness and incident of this work; while the famous Biblical series in the Campo Santo of Pisa has so largely perished as to be scarcely evidence to his colour. The first impression made by the Medici frescoes is their sumptuousness. When Gozzoli painted--if the story be true--he had only candle light: the window over the altar is new. But think of candle light being all the illumination of these walls as the painter worked! A new door and window have also been cut in the wall opposite the altar close to the three daughters of Piero, by vandal hands; and "Bruta, bruta!" says the guardian, very rightly.

The landscape behind the procession is hardly less interesting than the procession itself; but it is when we come to the meadows of paradise, with the angels and roses, the cypresses and birds, in the two chancel scenes, that this side of Gozzoli's art is most fascinating. He has travelled a long way from his master Fra Angelico here: the heaven is of the visible rather than the invisible eye; sense is present as well as the rapturous spirit. The little Medici who endured the tedium of the services here are to be felicitated with upon such an adorable presentment of glory. With plenty of altar candles the sight of these gardens of the blest must have beguiled many a mass. Thinking here in England upon the Medici chapel, I find that the impression it has left upon me is chiefly cypresses--cypresses black and comely, disposed by a master hand, with a glint of gold among them.

The picture that was over the altar has gone. It was a Lippo Lippi and is now in Berlin.

The first of the Medici family to rise to the highest power was

Giovanni d'Averardo de' Medici (known as Giovanni di Bicci), 1360-1429, who, a wealthy banker living in what is now the Piazza del Duomo, was well known for his philanthropy and interest in the welfare of the Florentines, but does not come much into public notice until 1401, when he was appointed one of the judges in the Baptistery door competition. He was a retiring, watchful man. Whether he was personally ambitious is not too evident, but he was opposed to tyranny and was the steady foe of the Albizzi faction, who at that time were endeavouring to obtain supreme power in Florentine affairs. In 1419 Giovanni increased his popularity by founding the Spedale degli Innocenti, and in 1421 he was elected gonfalonier, or, as we might now say, President of the Republic. In this capacity he made his position secure and reduced the nobles (chief of whom was Niccolò da Uzzano) to political weakness. Giovanni died in 1429, leaving one son, Cosimo, aged forty, a second, Lorenzo, aged thirtyfour, a fragrant memory and an immense fortune.

To Lorenzo, who remained a private citizen, we shall return in time; it is Cosimo (1389-1464) with whom we are now concerned. Cosimo de' Medici was a man of great mental and practical ability: he had been educated as well as possible; he had a passion both for art and letters; he inherited his father's financial ability and generosity, while he added to these gifts a certain genius for the management of men. One of the first things that Cosimo did after his father's death was to begin the palace where we now are, rejecting a plan by Brunelleschi as too splendid, and choosing instead one by Michelozzo, the partner of Donatello, two artists who remained his personal friends through life. Cosimo selected this site, in what was then the Via Larga but is now the Via Cavour, partly because his father had once lived there, and partly because it was close to S. Lorenzo, which his father, with six other families, had begun to rebuild, a work he intended himself to carry on.

The palace was begun in 1430 and was still in progress in 1433 when the Albizzi, who had always viewed the rise of the Medici family with apprehension and misgiving, and were now strengthened by the death of Niccolò da Uzzano, who, though powerful, had been a very cautious and temperate adviser, succeeded in getting a majority in the Signoria and passing a sentence of banishment on the whole Medici tribe as being too rich and ambitious to be good citizens of

a simple and frugal Republic. Cosimo therefore, after some days of imprisonment in the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio, during which he expected execution at any moment, left Florence for Venice, taking his architect with him. In 1434, however, the Florentines, realizing that under the Albizzi they were losing their independence, and what was to be a democracy was become an oligarchy, revolted, and Cosimo was recalled, and, like his father, was elected gonfalonier. With this recall began his long supremacy; for he returned like a king and like a king remained, quickly establishing himself as the leading man in the city, the power behind the Signoria. Not only did he never lose that position, but he made it so naturally his own that when he died he was able to transmit it to his son.

Cosimo de' Medici was, I think, the wisest and best ruler that Florence ever had and ranks high among the rulers that any state ever had. But he changed the Florentines from an independent people to a dependent one. In his capacity of Father of his Country he saw to it that his children lost their proud spirit. He had to be absolute; and this end he achieved in many ways, but chiefly by his wealth, which made it possible to break the rich rebel and to enslave the poor. His greatest asset--next his wealth--was his knowledge of the Florentine character. To know anything of this capricious, fickle, turbulent folk even after the event was in itself a task of such magnitude that almost no one else had compassed it; but Cosimo did more, he knew what they were likely to do. By this knowledge, together with his riches, his craft, his tact, his business ramifications as an international banker, his open-handedness and air of personal simplicity, Cosimo made himself a power. For Florence could he not do enough. By inviting the Pope and the Greek Emperor to meet there he gave it great political importance, and incidentally brought about the New Learning. He established the Platonic Academy and formed the first public library in the west. He rebuilt and endowed the monastery of S. Marco. He built and rebuilt other churches. He gave Donatello a free hand in sculpture and Fra Lippo Lippi and Fra Angelico in painting. He distributed altogether in charity and churches four hundred thousand of those golden coins which were invented by Florence and named florins after her--a sum equal to a million pounds of to-day. In every direction one comes upon traces of his generosity and thoroughness. After his death it was decided that as Pater Patriae, or Father of his Country, he should be for ever known.

Cosimo died in 1464, leaving an invalid son, Piero, aged forty-eight, known for his almost continuous gout as Il Gottoso. Giovanni and Cosimo had had to work for their power; Piero stepped naturally into it, although almost immediately he had to deal with a plot--the first for thirty years--to ruin the Medici prestige, the leader of which was that Luca Pitti who began the Pitti palace in order to have a better house than the Medici. The plot failed, not a little owing to young Lorenzo de' Medici's address, and the remaining few years of Piero's life were tranquil. He was a quiet, kindly man with the traditional family love of the arts, and it was for him that Gozzoli worked. He died in 1469, leaving two sons, Lorenzo (1449-1492) and Giuliano (1453-1478).

Lorenzo had been brought up as the future leading citizen of Florence: he had every advantage of education and environment, and was rich in the aristocratic spirit which often blossoms most richly in the second or third generation of wealthy business families. Giovanni had been a banker before everything, Cosimo an administrator, Piero a faithful inheritor of his father's wishes; it was left for Lorenzo to be the first poet and natural prince of the Medici blood. Lorenzo continued to bank but mismanaged the work and lost heavily; while his poetical tendencies no doubt distracted his attention generally from affairs. Yet such was his sympathetic understanding and his native splendour and gift of leadership that he could not but be at the head of everything, the first to be consulted and ingratiated. Not only was he the first Medici poet but the first of the family to marry not for love but for policy, and that too was a sign of decadence.

Lorenzo came into power when only twenty, and at the age of forty-two he was dead, but in the interval, by his interest in every kind of intellectual and artistic activity, by his passion for the greatness and glory of Florence, he made for himself a name that must always connote liberality, splendour, and enlightenment. But it is beyond question that under Lorenzo the Florentines changed deeply and for the worse. The old thrift and simplicity gave way to extravagance and ostentation; the old faith gave way too, but that was not wholly the effect of Lorenzo's natural inclination towards Platonic philosophy, fostered by his tutor Marsilio Ficino and his friends Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola, but was due in no small measure also to the hostility of Pope Sixtus, which culminated in the Pazzi Conspiracy of

1478 and the murder of Giuliano. Looking at the history of Florence from our present vantage-point we can see that although under Lorenzo the Magnificent she was the centre of the world's culture and distinction, there was behind this dazzling front no seriousness of purpose. She was in short enjoying the fruits of her labours as though the time of rest had come; and this when strenuousness was more than ever important. Lorenzo carried on every good work of his father and grandfather (he spent £65,000 a year in books alone) and was as jealous of Florentine interests; but he was also "The Magnificent," and in that lay the peril. Florence could do with wealth and power, but magnificence went to her head.

Lorenzo died in 1492, leaving three sons, of whom the eldest, Piero (1471-1503), succeeded him. Never was such a decadence. In a moment the Medici prestige, which had been steadily growing under Cosimo, Piero, and Lorenzo until it was world famous, crumbled to dust. Piero was a coarse-minded, pleasure-loving youth--"The Headstrong" his father had called him--whose one idea of power was to be sensual and tyrannical; and the enemies of Florence and of Italy took advantage of this fact. Savonarola's sermons had paved the way from within too. In 1494 Charles VIII of France marched into Italy; Piero pulled himself together and visited the king to make terms for Florence, but made such terms that on returning to the city he found an order of banishment and obeyed it. On November 9th, 1494, he and his family were expelled, and the mob, forgetting so quickly all that they owed to the Medici who had gone before, rushed to this beautiful palace and looted it. The losses that art and learning sustained in a few hours can never be estimated. A certain number of treasures were subsequently collected again, such as Donatello's David and Verrocchio's David, while Donatello's Judith was removed to the Palazzo Vecchio, where an inscription was placed upon it saying that her short way with Holofernes was a warning to all traitors; but priceless pictures, sculpture, and MSS. were ruthlessly demolished.

In the chapter on S. Marco we shall read of what experiments in government the Florentines substituted for that of the Medici, Savonarola for a while being at the head of the government, although only for a brief period which ended amid an orgy of lawlessness; and then, after a restless period of eighteen years, in which Florence had every claw cut and was weakened also by dissension, the Medici

returned--the change being the work of Lorenzo's second son, Giovanni de' Medici, who on the eve of becoming Pope Leo X procured their reinstatement, thus justifying the wisdom of his father in placing him in the Church. Piero having been drowned long since, his admirable but ill-starred brother Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, now thirty-three, assumed the control, always under Leo X; while their cousin, Giulio, also a Churchman, and the natural son of the murdered Giuliano, was busy, behind the scenes, with the family fortunes.

Giuliano lived only till 1516 and was succeeded by his nephew Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, a son of Peiro, a young man of no more political use than his father, and one who quickly became almost equally unpopular. Things indeed were going so badly that Leo X sent Giulio de' Medici (now a cardinal) from Rome to straighten them out, and by some sensible repeals he succeeded in allaying a little of the bitterness in the city. Lorenzo had one daughter, born in this palace, who was destined to make history--Catherine de' Medici--and no son. When therefore he died in 1519, at the age of twenty-seven, after a life of vicious selfishness (which, however, was no bar to his having the noblest tomb in the world, at S. Lorenzo), the succession should have passed to the other branch of the Medici family, the descendants of old Giovanni's second son Lorenzo, brother of Cosimo. But Giulio, at Rome, always at the ear of the indolent, pleasure-loving Leo X, had other projects. Born in 1478, the illegitimate son of a charming father, Giulio had none of the great Medici traditions, and the Medici name never stood so low as during his period of power. Himself illegitimate, he was the father of an illegitimate son, Alessandro, for whose advancement he toiled much as Alexander VI had toiled for that of Caesar Borgia. He had not the black, bold wickedness of Alexander VI, but as Pope Clement VII, which he became in 1523, he was little less admirable. He was cunning, ambitious, and tyrannical, and during his pontificate he contrived not only to make many powerful enemies and to see both Rome and Florence under siege, but to lose England for the Church.

We move, however, too fast. The year is 1519 and Lorenzo is dead, and the rightful heir to the Medici wealth and power was to be kept out. To do this Giulio himself moved to Florence and settled in the Medici palace, and on his return to Rome Cardinal Passerini was installed in the Medici palace in his stead, nominally as the

custodian of little Catherine de' Medici and Ippolito, a boy of ten, the illegitimate son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours. That Florence should have put up with this Roman control shows us how enfeebled was her once proud spirit. In 1521 Leo X died, to be succeeded, in spite of all Giulio's efforts, by Adrian of Utrecht, as Adrian VI, a good, sincere man who, had he lived, might have enormously changed the course not only of Italian but of English history. He survived, however, for less than two years, and then came Giulio's chance, and he was elected Pope Clement VII.

Clement's first duty was to make Florence secure, and he therefore sent his son Alessandro, then about thirteen, to join the others at the Medici palace, which thus now contained a resident cardinal, watchful of Medici interests; a legitimate daughter of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino (but owing to quarrels she was removed to a convent); an illegitimate son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, the nominal heir and already a member of the Government; and the Pope's illegitimate son, of whose origin, however, nothing was said, although it was implied that Lorenzo, Duke of Nemours, was his father.

This was the state of affairs during Clement's war with the Emperor Charles V, [2] which ended with the siege of Rome and the imprisonment of the Pope in the Castle of S. Angelo for some months until he contrived to escape to Orvieto; and meanwhile Florence, realizing his powerlessness, uttered a decree again banishing the Medici family, and in 1527 they were sent forth from the city for the third time. But even now, when the move was so safe, Florence lacked courage to carry it out until a member of the Medici family, furious at the presence of the base-born Medici in the palace, and a professed hater of her base-born uncle Clement VII and all his ways--Clarice Strozzi, née Clarice de' Medici, granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent--came herself to this house and drove the usurpers from it with her extremely capable tongue.

To explain clearly the position of the Florentine Republic at this time would be too deeply to delve into history, but it may briefly be said that by means of humiliating surrenders and much crafty diplomacy, Clement VII was able to bring about in 1529 peace between the Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France, by which Charles was left master of Italy, while his partner and ally in these transactions, Clement, expected for his own share certain benefits in which the humiliation

of Florence and the exaltation of Alessandro came first. Florence, having taken sides with Francis, found herself in any case very badly left, with the result that at the end of 1529 Charles V's army, with the papal forces to assist, laid siege to her. The siege lasted for ten months, in which the city was most ably defended by Ferrucci, that gallant soldier whose portrait by Piero di Cosimo is in our National Gallery--No. 895--and then came a decisive battle in which the Emperor and Pope were conquerors, a thousand brave Florentines were put to death and others were imprisoned.

Alessandro de' Medici arrived at the Medici palace in 1531, and in 1532 the glorious Florentine Republic of so many years' growth, for the establishment of which so much good blood had been spilt, was declared to be at an end. Alessandro being proclaimed Duke, his first act was to order the demolition of the great bell of the Signoria which had so often called the citizens to arms or meetings of independence.

Meanwhile Ippolito, the natural son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, and therefore the rightful heir, after having been sent on various missions by Clement VII, to keep him out of the way, settled at Bologna and took to poetry. He was a kindly, melancholy man with a deep sense of human injustice; and in 1535, when, after Clement VII's very welcome demise, the Florentine exiles who either had been banished from Florence by Alessandro or had left of their own volition rather than live in the city under such a contemptible ruler, sent an embassy to the Emperor Charles V to help them against this new tyrant, Ippolito headed it; but Alessandro prudently arranged for his assassination en route.

It is unlikely, however, that the Emperor would have done anything, for in the following year he allowed his daughter Margaret to become Alessandro's wife. That was in 1536. In January, 1537, Lorenzino de' Medici, a cousin, one of the younger branch of the family, assuming the mantle of Brutus, or liberator, stabbed Alessandro to death while he was keeping an assignation in the house that then adjoined this palace. Thus died, at the age of twenty-six, one of the most worthless of men, and, although illegitimate, the last of the direct line of Cosimo de' Medici, the Father of his Country, to govern Florence.

The next ruler came from the younger branch, to which we now turn. Old Giovanni di Bicci had two sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo. Lorenzo's son, Pier

Francesco de' Medici, had a son Giovanni de' Medici. This Giovanni, who married Caterina Sforza of Milan, had also a son named Giovanni, born in 1498, and it was he who was the rightful heir when Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, died in 1519. He was connected with both sides of the family, for his father, as I have said, was the great grandson of the first Medici on our list, and his wife was Maria Salviati, daughter of Lucrezia de' Medici--herself a daughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent--and Jacopo Salviati, a wealthy Florentine. When, however, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, died in 1519, Giovanni was a young man of twenty-one with an absorbing passion for fighting, which Clement VII (then Giulio) was only too keen to foster, since he wished him out of the way in order that his own projects for the ultimate advancement of the base-born Alessandro, and meanwhile of the catspaw, the base-born Ippolito, might be furthered. Giovanni had already done some good service in the field, was becoming famous as the head of his company of Black Bands, and was known as Giovanni delle Bande Nere; and his marriage to his cousin Maria Salviati and the birth of his only son Cosimo in 1519 made no difference to his delight in warfare. He was happy only when in the field of battle, and the struggle between Francis and Charles gave him ample opportunities, fighting on the side of Charles and the Pope and doing many brave and dashing things. He died at an early age, only twenty-eight, in 1526, the idol of his men, leaving a widow and child in poverty.

Almost immediately afterwards came the third banishment of the Medici family from Florence. Giovanni's widow and their son Cosimo got along as best they could until the murder of Alessandro in 1537, when Cosimo was nearly eighteen. He was a quiet, reserved youth, who had apparently taken but little interest in public affairs, and had spent his time in the country with his mother, chiefly in field sports. But no sooner was Alessandro dead, and his slayer Lorenzino had escaped, than Cosimo approached the Florentine council and claimed to be appointed to his rightful place as head of the State, and this claim he put, or suggested, with so much humility that his wish was granted. Instantly one of the most remarkable transitions in history occurred: the youth grew up almost in a day and at once began to exert unsuspected reserves of power and authority. In despair a number of the chief Florentines made an effort to depose him, and a battle was fought at Montemurlo, a few miles from Florence, between Cosimo's troops, fortified by some French allies, and the insurgents. That

was in 1537; the victory fell to Cosimo; and his long and remarkable reign began with the imprisonment and execution of the chief rebels.

Although Cosimo made so bloody a beginning he was the first imaginative and thoughtful administrator that Florence had had since Lorenzo the Magnificent. He set himself grimly to build upon the ruins which the past forty and more years had produced; and by the end of his reign he had worked wonders. As first he lived in the Medici palace, but after marrying a wealthy wife, Eleanor of Toledo, he transferred his home to the Signoria, now called the Palazzo Vecchio, as a safer spot, and established a bodyguard of Swiss lancers in Orcagna's loggia, close by. [3] Later he bought the unfinished Pitti palace with his wife's money, finished it, and moved there. Meanwhile he was strengthening his position in every way by alliances and treaties, and also by the convenient murder of Lorenzino, the Brutus who had rid Florence of Alessandro ten years earlier, and whose presence in the flesh could not but be a cause of anxiety since Lorenzino derived from an elder son of the Medici, and Cosimo from a younger. In 1555 the ancient republic of Siena fell to Cosimo's troops after a cruel and barbarous siege and was thereafter merged in Tuscany, and in 1570 Cosimo assumed the title of Cosimo I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and was crowned at Rome.

Whether or not the common accusation against the Medici as a family, that they had but one motive--mercenary ambition and self-aggrandisement--is true, the fact remains that the crown did not reach their brows until one hundred and seventy years from the first appearance of old Giovanni di Bicci in Florentine affairs. The statue of Cosimo I in the Piazza della Signoria has a bas-relief of his coronation. He was then fifty-one; he lived but four more years, and when he died he left a dukedom flourishing in every way: rich, powerful, busy, and enlightened. He had developed and encouraged the arts, capriciously, as Cellini's "Autobiography" tells us, but genuinely too, as we can see at the Uffizi and the Pitti. The arts, however, were not what they had been, for the great period had passed and Florence was in the trough of the wave. Yet Cosimo found the best men he could--Cellini, Bronzino, and Vasari--and kept them busy. But his greatest achievement as a connoisseur was his interest in Etruscan remains and the excavations at Arezzo and elsewhere which yielded the priceless relics now at the Archaeological Museum.

With Cosimo I this swift review of the Medici family ends. The rest have little interest for the visitor to Florence to-day, for whom Cellini's Perseus, made to Cosimo I's order, is the last great artistic achievement in the city in point of time. But I may say that Cosimo I's direct descendants occupied the throne (as it had now become) until the death of Gian Gastone, son of Cosimo III, who died in 1737. Tuscany passed to Austria until 1801. In 1807 it became French, and in 1814 Austrian again. In 1860 it was merged in the Kingdom of Italy under the rule of the monarch who has given his name to the great new Piazza--Vittorio Emmanuele.

After Gian Gastone's death one other Medici remained alive: Anna Maria Ludovica, daughter of Cosimo III. Born in 1667, she married the Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and survived until 1743. It was she who left to the city the priceless Medici collections, as I have stated in chapter VIII. The earlier and greatest of the Medici are buried in the church of S. Lorenzo or in Michelangelo's sacristy; the later Medici, beginning with Giovanni delle Bande Nere and his wife, and their son Cosimo I, are in the gorgeous mausoleum that adjoins S. Lorenzo and is still being enriched with precious marbles.

Such is an outline of the history of this wonderful family, and we leave their ancient home, built by the greatest and wisest of them, with mixed feelings of admiration and pity. They were seldom lovable; they were often despicable; but where they were great they were very great indeed. A Latin inscription in the courtyard reminds the traveller of the distinction which the house possesses, calling it the home not only of princes but of knowledge herself and a treasury of the arts. But Florence, although it bought the palace from the Riccardi family a century and more ago, has never cared to give it back its rightful name.



ROMAN VILLAS

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, by Edith Wharton

In studying the villas near the smaller Italian towns, it is difficult to learn much of their history. Now and then some information may be gleaned from a local guide-book, but the facts are usually meagre or inaccurate, and the name of the architect, the date of the building, the original plan of the garden, have often alike been forgotten.

With regard to the villas in and about Rome, the case is different. Here the student is overwhelmed by a profusion of documents. Illustrious architects dispute the honour of having built the famous pleasure-houses on the seven hills, and historians of art, from Vasari downward, have recorded their annals. Falda engraved them in the seventeenth century, and Percier and Fontaine at the beginning of the nineteenth; and they have been visited and described, at various periods, by countless travellers from different countries.

One of the earliest Roman gardens of which a description has been preserved is that which Bramante laid out within the Vatican in the last years of the fifteenth century. This terraced garden, with its monumental double flight of steps leading up by three levels to the Giardino della Pigna, was described in 1523 by the Venetian ambassador to Rome, who speaks of its grass parterres and fountains, its hedges of laurel and cypress, its plantations of mulberries and roses. One half of the garden (the court of the Belvedere) had brick-paved walks between rows of orange-trees; in its centre were statues of the Nile and the Tiber above a fountain; while the Apollo, the Laocoon and the Venus of the Vatican were placed about it in niches. This garden was long since sacrificed to the building of the Braccio Nuovo and the Vatican Library; but it is worth mentioning that Burckhardt, whose least word on Italian gardens is more illuminating than the treatises of other writers, thought that Bramante's terraced stairway first set the example of that architectural magnificence which marks the great Roman gardens of the Renaissance.

Next in date comes the Villa Madama, Raphael's unfinished masterpiece on

the slope of Monte Mario. This splendid pleasure-house, which was begun in 1516 for Cardinal Giuliano de' Medici, afterward Pope Clement VII, was intended to be the model of the great *_villa suburbana_*, and no subsequent building of the sort is comparable to what it would have been had the original plans been carried out. But the villa was built under an evil star. Raphael died before the work was finished, and it was carried on with some alterations by Giulio Romano and Antonio da Sangallo. In 1527 the troops of Cardinal Colonna nearly destroyed it by fire; and, without ever being completed, it passed successively into the possession of the Chapter of St. Eustace, of the Duchess of Parma (whence its name of *_Madama_*), and of the King of Naples, who suffered it to fall into complete neglect.

The unfinished building, with its mighty loggia stuccoed by Giovanni da Udine, and the semicircular arcade at the back, is too familiar to need detailed description; and the gardens are so dilapidated that they are of interest only to an eye experienced enough to reconstruct them from their skeleton. They consist of two long terraces, one above the other, cut in the side of the wooded slope overhanging the villa. The upper terrace is on a level with Raphael's splendid loggia, and seems but a roofless continuation of that airy hall. Against the hillside and at the end it is bounded by a retaining-wall once surmounted by a marble balustrade and set with niches for statuary, while on the other side it looks forth over the Tiber and the Campagna. Below this terrace is another of the same proportions, its retaining-wall broken at each end by a stairway descending from the upper level, and the greater part of its surface taken up by a large rectangular tank, into which water gushes from the niches in the lateral wall. It is evident from the breadth of treatment of these terraces that they are but a fragment of the projected whole. Percier and Fontaine, in their "*Maisons de Plaisance de Rome*" (1809), published an interesting "reconstitution" of the Villa Madama and its gardens, as they conceived it might have been carried to completion; but their plan is merely the brilliant conjecture of two artists penetrated with the spirit of the Renaissance, for they had no documents to go by. The existing fragment is, however, well worthy of study, for the purity of its architecture and the broad simplicity of its plan are in marked contrast to the complicated design and overcharged details of some of the later Roman gardens.

Third in date among the early Renaissance gardens comes another, of

which few traces are left: that of the Vigna del Papa, or Villa di Papa Giulio, just beyond the Porta del Popolo. Here, however, the building itself, and the architectural composition which once united the house and grounds, are fortunately well preserved, and so exceptionally interesting that they deserved a careful description. The Villa di Papa Giulio was built by Pope Julius III, whose pontificate extends from 1550 to 1555. The villa therefore dates from the middle of the sixteenth century; but so many architects were associated with it, and so much confusion exists as to their respective contributions, that it can only be said that the Pope himself, Michelangelo, Vignola, Vasari and Ammanati appear all to have had a hand in the work. The exterior elevation, though it has been criticized, is not as inharmonious as might have been expected, and on the garden side both plan and elevation have a charm and picturesqueness which disarm criticism. Above all, it is felt at once that the arrangement is perfectly suited to a warm climate. The villa forms a semicircle at the back, enclosing a paved court. The ground floor is an open vaulted arcade, adorned with Zuccherò's celebrated frescoes of *_putti_* peeping through vine-wreathed trellises; and the sides of the court, beyond this arcade, are bounded by two-storied lateral wings, with blind arcades and niches adorned with statues. Facing the villa, a colonnaded loggia terminates the court; and thence one looks down into the beautiful lower court of the bath, which appears to have been designed by Vasari. From the loggia, steps descend to a semicircular court enclosed in walls, with a balustraded opening in its centre; and this balustrade rests on a row of caryatids which encircle the lowest court and form a screen before the grotto-like bath under the arches of the upper terrace. The plan is too complicated, and the architectural motives are too varied, to admit of clear description: both must be seen to give an idea of the full beauty of the composition. Returning to the upper loggia above the bath, one looks across the latter to a corresponding loggia of three arches on the opposite side, on the axis of which is a gateway leading to the actual gardens—gardens which, alas! no longer exist. It will thus be seen that the flagged court, the two open loggias, and the bath are so many skilfully graduated steps in what Percier and Fontaine call the "artistic progression" linking the gardens to the house, while the whole is so planned that from the central hall of the villa (and in fact from its entrance-door) one may look across the court and down the long vista of columns, into what were once the shady depths of the garden.

In all Italian garden-architecture there is nothing quite comparable for charm and delicately reminiscent classicalism with this grotto-bath of Pope Julius's villa. Here we find the tradition of the old Roman villa-architecture, as it had been lovingly studied in the letters of Pliny, transposed into Renaissance forms, with the sense of its continued fitness to unchanged conditions of climate and a conscious return to the splendour of the old patrician life. It is instructive to compare this natural reflowering of a national art with the frigid archæological classicalism of Winckelmann and Canova. Here there is no literal transcription of uncomprehended detail: the spirit is preserved, because it is still living, but it finds expression in subtly altered forms. Above all, the artist has drawn his inspiration from Roman art, the true source of modern architecture, and not from that of Greece, which, for all its beauty and far-reaching æsthetic influences, was not the starting-point of modern artistic conceptions, for the plain historical reason that it was utterly forgotten and unknown when the mediæval world began to wake from its lethargy and gather up its scattered heritage of artistic traditions.

When John Evelyn came to Rome in 1644 and alighted "at Monsieur Petit's in the Piazza Spagnola," many of the great Roman villas were still in the first freshness of their splendour, and the taste which called them forth had not yet wearied of them. Later travellers, with altered ideas, were not sufficiently interested to examine in detail what already seemed antiquated and out of fashion; but to Evelyn, a passionate lover of architecture and garden-craft, the Italian villas were patterns of excellence, to be carefully studied and minutely described for the benefit of those who sought to imitate them in England. It is doubtful if later generations will ever be diverted by the aquatic "surprises" and mechanical toys in which Evelyn took such simple pleasure; but the real beauties he discerned are once more receiving intelligent recognition after two centuries of contempt and indifference. It is worth noting in this connection that, at the very height of the reaction against Italian gardens, they were lovingly studied and truly understood by two men great enough to rise above the prejudices of their age: the French architects Percier and Fontaine, whose volume contains some of the most suggestive analyses ever written of the purpose and meaning of Renaissance garden-architecture.

Probably one of the least changed among the villas visited by Evelyn is

“the house of the Duke of Florence upon the brow of Mons Pincius.” The Villa Medici, on being sold by that family in 1801, had the good fortune to pass into the hands of the French government, and its “facciata incrusted with antique and rare basso-relievos and statues” still looks out over the statued arcade, the terrace “balustraded with white marble” and planted with “perennial greens,” and the “mount planted with cypresses,” which Evelyn so justly admired.

The villa, built in the middle of the sixteenth century by Annibale Lippi, was begun for one cardinal and completed for another. It stands in true Italian fashion against the hillside above the Spanish Steps, its airy upper stories planted on one of the mighty bastion-like basements so characteristic of the Roman villa. A villa above, a fortress below, it shows that, even in the polished cinque-cento, life in the Papal States needed the protection of stout walls and heavily barred windows. The garden-façade, raised a story above the entrance, has all the smiling openness of the Renaissance pleasure-house, and is interesting as being probably the earliest example of the systematic use of fragments of antique sculpture in an architectural elevation. But this façade, with its charming central loggia, is sufficiently well known to make a detailed description superfluous, and it need be studied here only in relation to its surroundings.

Falda’s plan of the grounds, and that of Percier and Fontaine, made over a hundred and fifty years later, show how little succeeding fashions have been allowed to disturb the original design. The gardens are still approached by a long shady alley which ascends from the piazza before the entrance; and they are still divided into a symmetrically planted grove, a flower-garden before the house, and an upper wild-wood with a straight path leading to the “mount planted with cypresses.”

It is safe to say that no one enters the grounds of the Villa Medici without being soothed and charmed by that garden-magic which is the peculiar quality of some of the old Italian pleasantries. It is not necessary to be a student of garden-architecture to feel the spell of quiet and serenity which falls on one at the very gateway; but it is worth the student’s while to try to analyze the elements of which the sensation is composed. Perhaps they will be found to resolve themselves into diversity, simplicity and fitness. The plan of the garden is simple, but its different parts are so contrasted as to produce, by the

fewest means, a pleasant sense of variety without sacrifice of repose. The ilex-grove into which one first enters is traversed by hedged alleys which lead to _rond-points_ with stone seats and marble Terms. At one point the enclosing wall of ilex is broken to admit a charming open loggia, whence one looks into the depths of green below. Emerging from the straight shady walks, with their effect of uniformity and repose, one comes on the flower-garden before the house, spreading to the sunshine its box-edged parterres adorned with fountains and statues. Here garden and house-front are harmonized by a strong predominance of architectural lines, and by the beautiful lateral loggia, with niches for statues, above which the upper ilex-wood rises. Tall hedges and trees there are none; for from the villa one looks across the garden at the wide sweep of the Campagna and the mountains; indeed, this is probably one of the first of the gardens which Gurlitt defines as “gardens to look out from,” in contradistinction to the earlier sort, the “gardens to look into.” Mounting to the terrace, one comes to the third division of the garden, the wild-wood with its irregular levels, through which a path leads to the mount, with a little temple on its summit. This is a rare feature in Italian grounds: in hilly Italy there was small need of creating the artificial hillocks so much esteemed in the old English gardens. In this case, however, the mount justifies its existence, for it affords a wonderful view over the other side of Rome and the Campagna.

Finally, the general impression of the Medici garden resolves itself into a sense of fitness, of perfect harmony between the material at hand and the use made of it. The architect has used his opportunities to the utmost; but he has adapted nature without distorting it. In some of the great French gardens, at Vaux and Versailles for example, one is conscious, under all the beauty, of the immense effort expended, of the vast upheavals of earth, the forced creating of effects; but it was the great gift of the Italian gardener to see the natural advantages of his incomparable landscape, and to fit them into his scheme with an art which concealed itself.

While Annibale Lippi, an architect known by only two buildings, was laying out the Medici garden, the Palatine Hill was being clothed with monumental terraces by a master to whom the Italian Renaissance owed much of its stateliest architecture. Vignola, who transformed the slopes of the Palatine into the sumptuous Farnese gardens, was the architect of

the mighty fortress-villa of Caprarola, and of the garden-portico of Mondragone; and tradition ascribes to him also the incomparable Lante gardens at Bagnaia.

In the Farnese gardens he found full play for his gift of grouping masses and for the scenic sense which enabled him to create such grandiose backgrounds for the magnificence of the great Roman prelates. The Palatine gardens have been gradually sacrificed to the excavations of the Palace of the Cæsars, but their almost theatrical magnificence is shown in the prints of Falda and of Percier and Fontaine. In this prodigal development of terraces, niches, porticoes and ramps, one perceives the outcome of Bramante's double staircase in the inner gardens of the Vatican, and Burckhardt justly remarks that in the Farnese gardens "the period of unity of composition and effective grouping of masses" finally triumphs over the earlier style.

No villa was ever built on this site, and there is consequently an air of heaviness and over-importance about the stately ascent which leads merely to two domed pavilions; but the composition would have regained its true value had it been crowned by such a palace as the Roman cardinals were beginning to erect for themselves. It is especially interesting to note the contrast in style and plan between this garden and that of the contemporaneous Villa Medici. One was designed for display, the other for privacy, and the success with which the purpose of each is fulfilled shows the originality and independence of their creators. It is a common error to think of the Italian gardens of the Renaissance as repeating endlessly the same architectural effects: their peculiar charm lies chiefly in the versatility with which their designers adapted them to different sites and different requirements.

As an example of this independence of meaningless conventions, let the student turn from the Villa Medici and the Orti Farnesiani to a third type of villa created at the same time—the Casino of Pope Pius IV in the Vatican gardens, built in 1560 by the Neapolitan architect Pirro Ligorio.

This exquisite little garden-house lies in a hollow of the outer Vatican gardens near the Via de' Fondamenti. A hillside once clothed with a grove rises abruptly behind it, and in this hillside a deep oblong cut has been made and faced with a retaining-wall. In the space thus cleared

the villa is built, some ten or fifteen feet away from the wall, so that its ground floor is cool and shaded without being damp. The building, which is long and narrow, runs lengthwise into the cut, its long façades being treated as sides, while it presents a narrow end as its front elevation. The propriety of this plan will be seen when the restricted surroundings are noted. In such a small space a larger structure would have been disproportionate; and Ligorio hit on the only means of giving to a house of considerable size the appearance of a mere garden-pavilion.

Percier and Fontaine say that Ligorio built the Villa Pia “after the manner of the ancient houses, of which he had made a special study.” The influence of the Roman fresco-architecture is in fact visible in this delicious little building, but so freely modified by the personal taste of the architect that it has none of the rigidity of the “reconstitution,” but seems rather the day-dream of an artist who has saturated his mind with the past.

The façade is a mere pretext for the display of the most exquisite and varied stucco ornamentation, in which motives borrowed from the Roman *_stucchi_* are harmonized with endless versatility. In spite of the wealth of detail, it is saved from heaviness and confusion by its delicacy of treatment and by a certain naïveté which makes it more akin (fantastic as the comparison may seem) with the stuccoed façade of San Bernardino at Perugia than with similar compositions of its own period. The angels or genii in the oblong panels are curiously suggestive of Agostino da Duccio, and the pale-yellow tarnished surface of the stucco recalls the delicate hues of the Perugian chapel.

The ground floor consists of an open loggia of three arches on columns, forming a kind of atrium curiously faced with an elaborate mosaic-work of tiny round pebbles, stained in various colours and set in arabesques and other antique patterns. The coigns of the façade are formed of this same mosaic—a last touch of fancifulness where all is fantastic. The barrel-vault of the atrium is a marvel of delicate *_stuccature_*, evidently inspired by the work of Giovanni da Udine at the Villa Madama; and at each end stands a splendid marble basin resting on winged griffins. The fragile decorations of this exquisite loggia are open on three sides to the weather, and many windows of the upper rooms (which are decorated in the same style) are unshuttered and have broken panes,

so that this unique example of cinque-cento decoration is gradually falling into ruin from mere exposure. The steps of the atrium, flanked by marble Cupids on dolphins, lead to an oval paved court with a central fountain in which the Cupid-motive is repeated. This court is enclosed by a low wall with a seat running around it and surmounted by marble vases of a beautiful tazza-like shape. Facing the loggia, the wall is broken (as at the Villa di Papa Giulio) by a small pavilion resting on an open arcade, with an attic adorned with stucco panels; while at the sides, equidistant between the villa and the pavilion, are two vaulted porticoes, with façades like arches of triumph, by means of which access is obtained to curving ramps that lead to the lower level of the gardens. These porticoes are also richly adorned with stucco panels, and lined within with a mosaic-work of pebbles, forming niches for a row of busts.

From the central pavilion one looks down on a tank at its base (the pavilion being a story lower on its outer or garden side). This tank is surmounted by a statue of Thetis on a rock-work throne, in a niche formed in the basement of the pavilion. The tank encloses the pavilion on three sides, like a moat, and the water, gushing from three niches, overflows the low stone curb and drips on a paved walk slightly hollowed to receive it—a device producing a wonderful effect of coolness and superabundance of water.

The old gardens of the villa were on a level with the tank, and Falda's print shows the ingenuity of their planning. These gardens have now been almost entirely destroyed, and the *_bosco_* above the villa has been cut down and replaced by bare grass-banks dotted with shrubs.

The Villa Pia has been thus minutely described, first, because it is seldom accessible, and consequently little known; but chiefly because it is virtually not a dwellinghouse, but a garden-house, and thus forms a part of the actual composition of the garden. As such it stands alone in Italian architecture, and Burckhardt, who notes how well its lavish ornament is suited to a little pleasure-pavilion in a garden, is right in describing it as the “most perfect retreat imaginable for a midsummer afternoon.”

The outer gardens of the Vatican, in a corner of which the Villa Pia lies, were probably laid out by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, who

died in 1546; and though much disfigured, they still show traces of their original plan. The sunny sheltered terrace, espaliered with lemons, is a good example of the “walk for the cold season” for which Italian garden-architects always provided; and the large sunken flower-garden surrounded by hanging woods is one of the earliest instances of this effective treatment of the *giardino segreto*. In fact, the Vatican may have suggested many features of the later Renaissance garden, with its wide-spread plan which gradually came to include the park.

The seventeenth century saw the development of this extended plan, but saw also the decline of the architectural restraint and purity of detail which mark the generation of Vignola and Sangallo. The Villa Borghese, built in 1618 by the Flemish architect Giovanni Vasanzia (John of Xanten), shows a complete departure from the old tradition. Its elevation may indeed be traced to the influence of the garden-front of the Villa Medici, which was probably the prototype of the gay pleasure-house in which ornamental detail superseded architectural composition; but the garden-architecture of the Villa Borghese, and the treatment of its extensive grounds, show the complete triumph of the baroque.

The grounds of the Villa Borghese, which include a park of several hundred acres, were laid out by Domenico Savino and Girolamo Rainaldi, while its waterworks are due to Giovanni Fontana, whose name is associated with the great *jeux d’eaux* of the villas at Frascati. Falda’s plan shows that the grounds about the house have been little changed. At each end of the villa is the oblong secret garden, not sunken but walled; in front an entrance-court, at the back an open space enclosed in a wall of clipped ilexes against which statues were set, and containing a central fountain. Beyond the left-hand walled garden are various dependencies, including an aviary. These little buildings, boldly baroque in style, surcharged with stucco ornament, and not without a certain Flemish heaviness of touch, have yet that gaiety, that *imprévu*, which was becoming the distinguishing note of Roman garden-architecture. On a larger scale they would be oppressive; but as mere garden-houses, with their leafy background, and the picturesque adjuncts of high walls, wrought-iron gates, vases and statues, they have an undeniable charm.

The plan of the Borghese park has been the subject of much discussion. Falda's print shows only the vicinity of the villa, and it has never been decided when the outlying grounds were laid out and how much they have been modified. At present the park, with its romantic groves of umbrella-pine, its ilex avenues, lake and amphitheatre, its sham ruins and little buildings scattered on irregular grassy knolls, has the appearance of a *jardin anglais* laid out at the end of the eighteenth century. Herr Tuckermann, persuaded that this park is the work of Giovanni Fontana, sees in him the originator of the "sentimental" English and German landscape-gardens, with their hermitages, mausoleums and temples of Friendship; but Percier and Fontaine, from whose plan of the park his inference is avowedly drawn, state that the grounds were much modified in 1789 by Jacob Moore, an English landscape-gardener, and by Pietro Camporesi of Rome. Herr Gurlitt, who seems to have overlooked this statement, declares himself unable to pronounce on the date of this "creation already touched with the feeling of sentimentality"; but Burckhardt, who is always accurate, says that the hippodrome and the temple of Æsculapius are of late date, and that the park was remodelled in the style of Poussin's landscapes in 1849.

About thirty years later than the Villa Borghese there arose its rival among the great Roman country-seats, the Villa Belrespiro or Pamphily, on the Janiculan. The Villa Pamphily, designed by Alessandro Algardi of Bologna, is probably the best known and most admired of Roman *maisons de plaisance*, and its incomparable ilex avenues and pine-woods, its rolling meadows and wide views over the Campagna, have enchanted many to whom its architectural beauties would not appeal.

The house, with its incrustations of antique bas-reliefs, cleverly adapted in the style of the Villa Medici, but with far greater richness and license of ornament, is a perfect example of the seventeenth-century villa, or rather casino; for it was really intended, not for a residence, but for a suburban lodge. It is flanked by lateral terraces, and the garden-front is a story lower than the other, so that the balcony of the first floor looks down on a great sunken garden, enclosed in the retaining-walls of the terraces, and richly adorned with statues in niches, fountains and *parterres de broderie*. Thence a double stairway descends to what was once the central portion of the gardens, a great amphitheatre bounded by ilex-woods, with a *théâtre d'eaux* and stately flights of steps leading up to terraced ilex-groves; but all

this lower garden was turned into an English park in the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the finest of Roman gardens fell a sacrifice to this senseless change; for in beauty of site, in grandeur of scale, and in the wealth of its Roman sculpture, the Villa Pamphily was unmatched. Even now it is full of interesting fragments; but the juxtaposition of an undulating lawn and dotty shrubberies to the stately garden-architecture about the villa has utterly destroyed the unity of the composition.

There is a legend to the effect that Le Nôtre laid out the park of the Villa Pamphily when he came to Rome in 1678; but Percier and Fontaine, who declare that there is nothing to corroborate the story, point out that the Villa Pamphily was begun over thirty years before Le Nôtre's visit. Absence of proof, however, means little to the average French author, eager to vindicate Le Nôtre's claim to being the father not only of French, but of Italian landscape-architecture; and M. Riat, in "*L'Art des Jardins*," repeats the legend of the Villa Pamphily, while Dussieux, in his "*Artists Français à l'Etranger*," anxious to heap further honours on his compatriot, actually ascribes to him the plan of the Villa Albani, which was laid out by Pietro Nolli nearly two hundred years after Le Nôtre's visit to Rome! Apparently the whole story of Le Nôtre's laying out of Italian gardens is based on the fact that he remodelled some details of the Villa Ludovisi; but one need only compare the dates of his gardens with those of the principal Roman villas to see that he was the pupil and not the master of the great Italian garden-architects. The last great country house built for a Roman cardinal is the villa outside the Porta Salaria which Carlo Marchionne built in 1746 for Cardinal Albani. In spite of its late date, the house still conforms to the type of Roman *_villa suburbana_* which originated with the Villa Medici; and it is interesting to observe that the Roman architects, having hit on so appropriate and original a style, did not fear to continue it in spite of the growing tendency toward a lifeless classicalism.

Cardinal Albani was a passionate collector of antique sculpture, and the villa, having been built to display his treasures, is appropriately planned with an open arcade between rusticated pilasters, which runs the whole length of the façade on the ground floor, and is continued by a long portico at each end. The grounds, laid out by Antonio Nolli, have been much extolled. Burckhardt sees in them traces of the reaction of

French eighteenth-century gardening on the Italian school; but may it not rather be that, the Villa Albani being, by a rare exception, built on level ground, the site inevitably suggested a treatment similar to the French? It is hard to find anything specifically French, any motive which has not been seen again and again in Italy, in the plan of the Albani gardens; and their most charming feature, the long ilex-walk connecting the villa with the _bosco_, exemplifies the Italian habit of providing shady access from the house to the wood. Dussieux, at any rate, paid Le Nôtre no compliment in attributing to him the plan of the Villa Albani; for the great French artist contrived to put more poetry into the flat horizons of Vaux and Versailles than Nolli has won from the famous view of the Campagna which is said to have governed the planning of the Villa Albani.

The grounds are laid out in formal quincunxes of clipped ilex, but before the house lies a vast sunken garden enclosed in terraces. The farther end of the garden is terminated by a semicircular portico called the _Caffè_, built later than the house, under the direction of Winckelmann; and in this structure, and in the architecture of the terraces, one sees the heavy touch of that neo-Grecianism which was to crush the life out of eighteenth-century art. The gardens of the Villa Albani seem to have been decorated by an archæologist rather than an artist. It is interesting to note that antique sculpture, when boldly combined with a living art, is one of the most valuable adjuncts of the Italian garden; whereas, set in an artificial evocation of its own past, it loses all its vitality and becomes as lifeless as its background.

One of the most charming of the smaller Roman villas lies outside the Porta Salaria, a mile or two beyond the Villa Albani. This is the country-seat of Prince Don Lodovico Chigi. In many respects it recalls the Sienese type of villa. At the entrance, the highroad is enlarged into a semicircle, backed by a wall with busts; and on the axis of the iron gates one sees first a court flanked by box-gardens, then an open archway running through the centre of the house, and beyond that, the vista of a long walk enclosed in high box-hedges and terminating in another semicircle with statues, backed by an ilex-planted mount. The plan has all the compactness and charm of the Tuscan and Umbrian villas. The level ground about the house is subdivided into eight square box-hedged gardens, four on a side, enclosing symmetrical box-bordered plots. Beyond these are two little groves with statues and benches. The

ground falls away in farm-land below this level, leaving only the long central alley which appears to lead to other gardens, but which really ends in the afore-mentioned semicircle, behind which is a similar alley, running at right angles, and leading directly to the fields.

At the other end of Rome lies the only small Roman garden comparable in charm with Prince Chigi's. This is the Priorato, or Villa of the Knights of Malta, near Santa Sabina, on the Aventine. Piranesi, in 1765, remodelled and decorated the old chapel adjoining the house; and it is said that he also laid out the garden. If he did so, it shows how late the tradition of the Renaissance garden lingered in Italy; for there is no trace of romantic influences in the Priorato. The grounds are small, for the house stands on a steep ledge overlooking the Tiber, whence there is a glorious view of St. Peter's and the Janiculum. The designer of the garden evidently felt that it must be a mere setting to this view; and accordingly he laid out a straight walk, walled with box and laurel and running from the gate to the terrace above the river. The prospect framed in this green tunnel is one of the sights of Rome; and, by a touch peculiarly Italian, the keyhole of the gate has been so placed as to take it in. To the left of the pleached walk lies a small flower-garden, planted with square-cut box-trees, and enclosed in a high wall with niches containing statues: a real "secret garden," full of sunny cloistered stillness, in restful contrast to the wide prospect below the terrace.

The grounds behind the Palazzo Colonna belong to another type, and are an interesting example of the treatment of a city garden, especially valuable now that so many of the great gardens within the walls of Rome have been destroyed.

The Colonna palace stands at the foot of the Quirinal Hill, and the gardens are built on the steep slope behind it, being entered by a stately gateway from the Via Quirinale. On this upper level there is a charming rectangular box-garden, with flower-plots about a central basin. Thence one descends to two narrow terraces, one beneath the other, planted with box and ilex, and adorned with ancient marbles. Down the centre, starting from the upper garden, there is an elaborate _château d'eau_ of baroque design, with mossy urns and sea-gods, terminating in a basin fringed with ferns; and beneath this central composition the garden ends in a third wide terrace, planted with

square-clipped ilexes, which look from above like a level floor of verdure. Graceful stone bridges connect this lowest terrace with the first-floor windows of the palace, which is divided from its garden by a narrow street; and the whole plan is an interesting example of the beauty and variety of effect which may be produced on a small steep piece of ground.

Of the other numerous gardens which once crowned the hills of Rome, but few fragments remain. The Villa Celimontana, or Mattei, on the Cælian, still exists, but its grounds have been so Anglicized that it is interesting chiefly from its site and from its associations with St. Philip Neri, whose seat beneath the giant ilexes is still preserved. The magnificent Villa Ludovisi has vanished, leaving only, amid a network of new streets, the Casino of the Aurora and a few beautiful fragments of architecture incorporated in the courtyard of the ugly Palazzo Margherita; and the equally famous Villa Negroni was swept away to make room for the Piazza delle Terme and the Grand Hôtel. The Villa Sacchetti, on the slope of Monte Mario, is in ruins; in ruins the old hunting-lodge of Cecchignola, in the Campagna, on the way to the Divino Amore. These and many others are gone or going; but at every turn the watchful eye still lights on some lingering fragment of old garden-art—some pillared gateway or fluted _vasca_ or broken statue cowering in its niche—all testifying to what Rome's crown of gardens must have been, and still full of suggestion to the student of her past.



WET-WEATHER WORK.

BY A FARMER.

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II.

Snowing: the checkered fields below are traceable now only by the brown lines of fences and the sparse trees that mark the hedge-rows. The white of the houses and of the spires of the town is seen dimly through the snow, and seems to waver and shift position like the sails and spars of ships seen through fog. And straightway upon this image of ships and swaying spars I go sailing back to the farm-land of the past, and sharpen my pen for another day's work among _The Old Farm-Writers_.

I suspect Virgil was never a serious farmer. I am confident he never had one of those callosities upon the inner side of his right thumb which come of the lower thole of a scythe-snath, after a week's mowing. But he had that quick poet's eye which sees at a glance what other men see only in a day. Not a shrub or a tree, not a bit of fallow ground or of nodding lentils escaped his observation; not a bird or a bee; not even the mosquitoes, which to this day hover pestiferously about the low-lying sedge-lands of Mantua. His first pastoral, little known now, and rarely printed with his works, is inscribed _Culex_.[13]

Young Virgil appears to have been of a delicate constitution, and probably left the fever-bearing regions of the Mincio for the higher plain of Milan for sanitary reasons, as much as the other,--of studying, as men of his parts did study, Greek and philosophy. There is a story, indeed, that he studied and practised farriery, as his father had done before him; and Jethro Tull, in his crude onslaught upon what he calls the Virgilian husbandry, (chap. ix.,) intimates that a farrier could be no way fit to lay down the rules for good farm-practice. But this story of his having been a horse-doctor rests, so far as I can discover, only on this flimsy tradition,--that the young poet, on his way to the South of Italy, after leaving Milan and Mantua, fell in at Rome with the master-of-horse to Octavianus, and gave such shrewd hints to that official in regard to the points and failings of certain favorite horses of the Roman Triumvir (for Octavianus had not as yet assumed the purple)

as to gain a presentation to the future Augustus, and rich marks of his favor.

It is certain that the poet journeyed to the South, and that thenceforward the glorious sunshine of Baiæ and of the Neapolitan shores gave a color to his poems and to his life.

Yet his agricultural method was derived almost wholly from his observation in the North of Italy. He never forgot the marshy borders of the Mincio nor the shores of beautiful Benacus (Lago di Garda); who knows but he may some time have driven his flocks afield on the very battle-ground of Solferino?

But the ruralities of Virgil take a special interest from the period in which they were written. He followed upon the heel of long and desolating intestine wars,--a singing-bird in the wake of vultures. No wonder the voice seemed strangely sweet.

The eloquence of the Senate had long ago lost its traditionary power; the sword was every way keener. Who should listen to the best of speakers, when Pompey was in the forum, covered with the spoils of the East? Who should care for Cicero's periods, when the magnificent conqueror of Gaul is skirting the Umbrian Marshes, making straight for the Rubicon and Rome?

Then came Pharsalia, with its bloody trail, from which Cæsar rises only to be slaughtered in the Senate-Chamber. Next comes the long duel between the Triumvirate and the palsied representatives of the Republican party. Philippi closes that interlude; and there is a new duel between Octavianus and Antony (Lepidus counting for nothing). The gallant lover of Cleopatra is pitted against a gallant general who is a nephew to the first Cæsar. The fight comes off at Actium, and the lover is the loser; the pretty Egyptian Jezebel, with her golden-prowed galleys, goes sweeping down, under a full press of wind, to swell the squadron of the conqueror. The winds will always carry the Jezebels to the conquering side.

Such, then, was the condition of Italy,--its families divided, its grain-fields trampled down by the Volscian cavalry, its houses red with fresh blood-stains, its homes beyond the Po parcelled out to lawless

returning soldiers, its public security poised on the point of the sword of Augustus,--when Virgil's *Bucolics* appear: a pastoral thanksgiving for the patrimony that had been spared him, through court-favor.

There is a show of gross adulation that makes one blush for his manhood; but withal he is a most lithesome poet, whose words are like honeyed blossoms, and whose graceful measure is like a hedge of bloom that sways with spring breezes, and spends perfume as it sways.

The *Georgics* were said to have been written at the suggestion of Mæcenas, a cultivated friend of Augustus, who, like many another friend of the party in power, had made a great fortune out of the wars that desolated Italy. He made good use of it, however, in patronizing Virgil, and in bestowing a snug farm in the Sabine country upon Horace; where I had the pleasure of drinking goats' milk--"*_dulci digne mero_*"--in the spring of 184-.

There can be no doubt but Virgil had been an attentive reader of Xenophon, of Hesiod, of Cato, and of Varro; otherwise he certainly would have been unworthy of the task he had undertaken,--that of laying down the rules of good husbandry in a way that should insure the reading of them, and kindle a love for the pursuit.

I suspect that Virgil was not only a reader of all that had been written on the subject, but that he was also an insistant questioner of every sagacious landholder and every sturdy farmer that he fell in with, whether on the Campanian hills or at the house of Mæcenas. How else does a man accomplish himself for a didactic work relating to matters of fact? I suspect, moreover, that Virgil, during those half-dozen years in which he was engaged upon this task, lost no opportunity of inspecting every bee-hive that fell in his way, of measuring the points and graces of every pretty heifer he saw in the fields, and of noting with the eye of an artist the color of every furrow that glided from the plough. It is inconceivable that a man of his intellectual address should have given so much of literary toil to a work that was not in every essential fully up to the best practice of the day. Five years, it is said, were given to the accomplishment of this short poem. What say our poetasters to this? Fifteen hundred days, we will suppose, to less than twice as many lines; blocking out four or five for his morning's task, and all the evening--for he was a late worker--licking them into shape, as a

bear licks her cubs.

But *_cui bono_*? what good is in it all? Simply as a work of art, it will be cherished through all time,--an earlier Titian, whose color can never fade. It was, besides, a most beguiling peace-note, following upon the rude blasts of war. It gave a new charm to forsaken homesteads. Under the Virgilian leadership, Monte Gennaro and the heights of Tusculum beckon the Romans to the fields; the meadows by reedy Thrasymenus are made golden with doubled crops. The Tarentine sheep multiply around Benacus, and crop close those dark bits of herbage which have been fed by the blood of Roman citizens.

Thus much for the magic of the verse; but there is also sound farm-talk in Virgil. I am aware that Seneca, living a few years after him, invidiously objects that he was more careful of his language than of his doctrine, and that Columella quotes him charily,--that the collector of the "Geoponics" ignores him, and that Tull gives him clumsy raillery; but I have yet to see in what respect his system falls short of Columella, or how it differs materially, except in fulness, from the teachings of Crescenzi, who wrote a thousand years and more later. There is little in the poem, save its superstitions, from which a modern farmer can dissent.[14]

We are hardly launched upon the first Georgic before we find a pretty suggestion of the theory of rotation,--

"Sic quoque mutatis requiescunt foetibus arva."

Rolling and irrigation both glide into the verse a few lines later. He insists upon the choice of the best seed, advises to keep the drains clear, even upon holy-days, (268,) and urges, in common with a great many shrewd New-England farmers, to cut light meadows while the dew is on, (288-9,) even though it involve night-work. Some, too, he says, whittle their torches by fire-light, of a winter's night; and the good wife, meantime, lifting a song of cheer, plies the shuttle merrily. The shuttle is certainly an archaism, whatever the good wife may be.

His theory of weather-signs, taken principally from Aratus, agrees in many respects with the late Marshal Bugeaud's observations, upon which the Marshal planted his faith so firmly that he is said to have ordered

all his campaigns in Africa in accordance with them.

In the opening of the second book, Virgil insists, very wisely, upon proper adaptation of plantations of fruit-trees to different localities and exposures,--a matter which is far too little considered by farmers of our day. His views in regard to propagation, whether by cuttings, layers, or seed, are in agreement with those of the best Scotch nursery-men; and in the matter of grafting or inoculation, he errs (?) only in declaring certain results possible, which even modern gardening has not accomplished. Dryden shall help us to the pretty falsehood:--

"The thin-leaved arbute hazel-grafts receives,
And planes huge apples bear, that bore but leaves.
Thus mastful beech the bristly chestnut bears,
And the wild ash is white with blooming pears,
And greedy swine from grafted elms are fed
With falling acorns, that on oaks are bred."

It is curious how generally this belief in something like promiscuous grafting was entertained by the old writers. Palladius repeats it with great unction in his poem "De Insitione," two or three centuries later;[15] and in the tenth book of the "Geoponics," a certain Damogerontis (whoever he may have been) says, (cap. lxxv.) "Some rustic writers allege that nut-trees and resinous trees ([Greek: ta rhêtinên echonta]) cannot be successfully grafted; but," he continues, "this is a mistake; I have myself grafted the pistache nut into the terebenthine."

Is it remotely possible that these old gentlemen understood the physiology of plants better than we?

As I return to Virgil, and slip along the dulcet lines, I come upon this cracking laconism, in which is compacted as much wholesome advice as a loose farm-writer would spread over a page:--

"Laudato ingentia rura,
Exiguum colito."[16]

The wisdom of the advice for these days of steam-engines, reapers, and high wages, is more than questionable; but it is in perfect agreement with the notions of a great many old-fashioned farmers who live nearer

to the heathen past than they imagine.

The cattle of Virgil are certainly no prize-animals. Any good committee would vote them down incontinently:--

----"Cui turpe caput, cui plurima cervix,"

(iii. 52,) would not pass muster at any fair of the last century.

The horses are better; there is the dash of high venture in them; they have snuffed battle; their limbs are suppled to a bounding gallop,--as where in the *Æneid*,

"Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum."

The fourth book of the *Georgics* is full of the murmur of bees, showing how the poet had listened, and had loved to listen. After describing minutely how and where the homes of the honey-makers are to be placed, he offers them this delicate attention:--

"Then o'er the running stream or standing lake
A passage for thy weary people make;
With osier floats the standing water strew;
Of massy stones make bridges, if it flow;
That basking in the sun thy bees may lie,
And, resting there, their flaggy pinions dry."

DRYDEN.

Who cannot see from this how tenderly the man had watched the buzzing yellow-jackets, as they circled and stooped in broad noon about some little pool in the rills that flow into the Lago di Garda? For hereabout, of a surety, the poet once sauntered through the noontides, while his flock cropped the "milk-giving cytissus," upon the hills.

And charming hills they are, as my own eyes can witness: nay, my little note-book of travel shall itself tell the story. (The third shelf, upon the right, my boy.)

No matter how many years ago,--I was going from Milan, (to which place I

had come by Piacenza and Lodi,) on my way to Verona by Brescia and Peschiera. At Desenzano, or thereabout, the blue lake of Benaco first appeared. A few of the higher mountains that bounded the view were still capped with snow, though it was latter May. Through fragrant locusts and mulberry-trees, and between irregular hedges, we dashed down across the isthmus of Sermione, where the ruins of a Roman castle flout the sky.

Hedges and orchards and fragrant locusts still hem the way, as we touch the lake, and, rounding its southern skirt, come in sight of the grim bastions of Peschiera. A Hungarian sentinel, lithe and tall, I see pacing the rampart, against the blue of the sky. Women and girls come trooping into the narrow road,--for it is near sunset,--with their aprons full of mulberry-leaves. A bugle sounds somewhere within the fortress, and the mellow music swims the water, and beats with melodious echo--boom on boom--against Sermione and the farther shores.

The sun just dipping behind the western mountains, with a disk all golden, pours down a flood of yellow light, tinting the mulberry-orchards, the edges of the Roman castle, the edges of the waves where the lake stirs, and spreading out in a bay of gold where the lake lies still.

Virgil never saw a prettier sight there; and I was thinking of him, and of my old master beating off spondees and dactyls with a red ruler on his threadbare knee, when the sun sunk utterly, and the purple shadows dipped us all in twilight.

"_È arrivato, Signore!_" said the _vetturino_. True enough, I was at the door of the inn of Peschiera, and snuffed the stew of an Italian supper.

Virgil closes the first book of the Georgics with a poetic forecast of the time when ploughmen should touch upon rusted war-weapons in their work, and turn out helmets empty, and bones of dead soldiers,--as indeed they might, and did. But how unlike a poem it will sound, when the schools are opened on the Rappahannock again, and the boy scans,--choking down his sobs,--

"Aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanes,
Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulcris,"

and the master veils his eyes!

I fear that Virgil was harmed by the Georgican success, and became more than ever an adulator of the ruling powers. I can fancy him at a palace tea-drinking, where pretty court-lips give some witty turn to his "*_Sic Vos, non Vobis_*," and pretty court-eyes glance tenderly at Master Marius, who blushes, and asks some Sabina (not Poppæa) after Tibullus and his Delia. But a great deal is to be forgiven to a man who can turn compliments as Virgil turned them. What can be more exquisite than that allusion to the dead boy Marcellus, in the Sixth Book of the *Æneid*? He is reading it aloud before Augustus, at Rome. Mæcenas is there from his tall house upon the Esquiline; possibly Horace has driven over from the Sabine country,--for, alone of poets, he was jolly enough to listen to the reading of a poem not his own. Above all, the calm-faced Octavia, Cæsar's sister, and the rival of Cleopatra, is present. A sad match she has made of it with Antony; and her boy Marcellus is just now dead,--dying down at Baiæ, notwithstanding the care of that famous doctor, Antonius Musa, first of hydropaths.

Virgil had read of the Sibyl,--of the entrance to Hades,--of the magic metallic bough that made Charon submissive,--of the dog Cerberus, and his sop,--of the Greeks who welcomed Æneas,--then of the father Anchises, who told the son what brave fate should belong to him and his,--warning him, meantime, with alliterative beauty, against the worst of wars,--

"Ne, pueri, ne tanta animis assuescite bella;
Neu patriæ validas in viscera vertite vires,"--

too late, alas! There were those about Augustus who could sigh over this.

Virgil reads on: Anchises is pointing out to Æneas that old Marcellus who fought Hannibal; and beside him, full of beauty, strides a young hero about whom the attendants throng.

"And who is the young hero," demands Æneas, "over whose brow a dark fate is brooding?"

(The motherless Octavia is listening with a yearning heart.)

And Anchises, the tears starting to his eyes, says,--

"Seek not, O son, to fathom the sorrows of thy kindred. The Fates, that lend him, shall claim him; a jealous Heaven cannot spare such gifts to Rome. Then, what outcry of manly grief shall shake the battlements of the city! what a wealth of mourning shall Father Tiber see, as he sweeps past his new-made grave! Never a Trojan who carried hopes so high, nor ever the land of Romulus so gloried in a son."

(Octavia is listening.)

"Ah, piety! alas for the ancient faith! alas for the right hand so stanch in battle! None, none could meet him, whether afoot or with reeking charger he pressed the foe. Ah, unhappy youth! If by any means thou canst break the harsh decrees of Fate, thou wilt be--Marcellus!"

It is Octavia's lost boy; and she is carried out fainting.

But Virgil receives a matter of ten thousand sesterces a line,--which, allowing for difference in exchange and value of gold, may (or may not) have been a matter of ten thousand dollars. With this bouncing bag of sesterces, Virgil shall go upon the shelf for to-day.

* * * * *

I must name Horace for the reason of his "_Procul beatus_" etc., if I had no other; but the truth is, that, though he rarely wrote intentionally of country-matters, yet there was in him that fulness of rural taste which bubbled over--in grape-clusters, in images of rivers, in snowy Soracte, in shade of plane-trees; nay, he could not so much as touch an _amphora_ but the purple juices of the hill-side stained his verse as they stained his lip. See, too, what a garden pungency there is in his garlic ode (III. 5); and the opening to Torquatus (Ode VII. Lib. 4) is the limning of one who has followed the changes of the bursting spring with his whole heart in his eyes:--

Diffugere nives, redeunt jam gramina campis,"--

every school-boy knows it: but what every school-boy does not know, and but few of the masters, is this charming, jingling rendering of it into the Venetian dialect:--

"La neve xè andàda,
Su i prài torna i fieri
De cento colori,
E a dosso de i àlbori
La fogia è tornada
A farli vestir.

"Che gusto e dilèto
Che dà quèla tèra
Cambiàda de cièra,
E i fiumi die placidi
Sbassài nel so' lèto
Va zòzo in te 'l mar!"[17]

On my last wet-day, I spoke of the elder Pliny, and now the younger Pliny shall tell us something of one or two of his country-places. Pliny was a government-official, and was rich: whether these facts had any bearing on each other I know no more than I should know if he had lived in our times.

I know that he had a charming place down by the sea, near to Ostium. Two roads led thither; "both of them," he says, "in some parts sandy, which makes it heavy and tedious, if you travel in a coach; but easy enough for those who ride. My villa" (he is writing to his friend Gallus, Epist. XX. Lib. 2) "is large enough for all convenience, and not expensive." He describes the portico as affording a capital retreat in bad weather, not only for the reason that it is protected by windows, but because there is an extraordinary projection of the roof. "From the middle of this portico you pass into a charming inner court, and thence into a large hall which extends towards the sea,--so near, indeed, that under a west wind the waves ripple on the steps. On the left of this hall is a large lounging-room (_cubiculum_), and a lesser one beyond, with windows to the east and west. The angle which this lounging-room forms with the hall makes a pleasant lee, and a loitering-place for my family in the winter. Near this again is a crescent-shaped apartment, with windows which receive the sun all day, where I keep my favorite

authors. From this, one passes to a bed-chamber by a raised passage, under which is a stove that communicates an agreeable warmth to the whole apartment. The other rooms in this portion of the villa are for the freedmen and slaves; but still are sufficiently well ordered (_tam mundis_) for my guests."

And he goes on to describe the bath-rooms, the cooling-rooms, the sweating-rooms, the tennis-court, "which lies open to the warmth of the afternoon sun." Adjoining this is a tower, with two apartments below and two above,--besides a supper-room, which commands a wide look-out along the sea, and over the villas that stud the shores. At the opposite end of the tennis-court is another tower, with its apartments opening upon a museum,--and below this the great dining-hall, whose windows look upon gardens, where are box-tree hedges, and rosemary, and bowers of vines. Figs and mulberries grow profusely in the garden; and walking under them, one approaches still another banqueting-hall, remote from the sea, and adjoining the kitchen-garden. Thence a grand portico (_crypto-porticus_) extends with a range of windows on either side, and before the portico is a terrace perfumed with violets. His favorite apartment, however, is a detached building, which he has himself erected in a retired part of the grounds. It has a warm winter-room, looking one way on the terrace, and another on the ocean; through its folding-doors may be seen an inner chamber, and within this again a sanctum, whose windows command three views totally separate and distinct,--the sea, the woods, or the villas along the shore.

"Tell me," he says, "if all this is not very charming, and if I shall not have the honor of your company, to enjoy it with me?"

If Pliny regarded the seat at Ostium as only a convenient and inexpensive place, we may form some notion of his Tuscan property, which, as he says in his letter to his friend Apollinaris, (Lib. V. Epist. 6,) he prefers to all his others, whether of Tivoli, Tusculum, or Palestrina. There, at a distance of a hundred and fifty miles from Rome, in the midst of the richest corn-bearing and olive-bearing regions of Tuscany, he can enjoy country quietude. There is no need to be slipping on his toga; ceremony is left behind. The air is healthful; the scene is quiet. "_Studiis animum, venatu corpus exerceo._" I will not follow him through the particularity of the description which he gives to his friend Apollinaris. There are the wide-reaching views of fruitful

valleys and of empurpled hill-sides; there are the fresh winds sweeping from the distant Apennines; there is the _gestatio_ with its clipped boxes, the embowered walks, the colonnades, the marble banquet-rooms, the baths, the Carystian columns, the soft, embracing air, and the violet sky. I leave Pliny seated upon a bench in a marble alcove of his Tuscan garden. From this bench, the water, gushing through several little pipes, as if it were pressed out by the weight of the persons reposing upon it, falls into a stone cistern underneath, whence it is received into a polished marble basin, so artfully contrived that it is always full, without ever overflowing. "When I sup here," he writes, "this basin serves for a table,--the larger dishes being placed round the margin, while the smaller ones swim about in the form of little vessels and waterfowl."

Such _al fresco_ suppers the country-gentlemen of Italy ate in the first century of our era!

* * * * *

Palladius wrote somewhere about the middle of the fourth century. His work is arranged in the form of a calendar for the months, and closes with a poem which is as inferior to the poems of the time of Augustus as the later emperors were inferior to the Cæsars. There is in his treatise no notable advance upon the teachings of Columella, whom he frequently quotes,--as well as certain Greek authorities of the Lower Empire. I find in his treatise a somewhat fuller list of vegetables, fruits, and field-crops than belongs to the earlier writers. I find more variety of treatment. I see a waning faith in the superstitions of the past; Bacchus and the Lares are less jubilant than they were; but the Christian civilization has not yet vivified the art of culture. The magnificent gardens of Nero and the horticultural experiences of the great Adrian at Tivoli have left no traces in the method or inspiration of Palladius.

* * * * *

I will not pass wholly from the classic period, without allusion to the recent book of Professor Daubeny on Roman husbandry. It is charming, and yet disappointing,--not for failure, on his part, to trace the traditions to their sources, not for lack of learning or skill, but for

lack of that *_afflatus_* which should pour over and fill both subject and talker, where the talker is lover as well as master.

Daubeny's husbandry lacks the odor of fresh-turned ground,--lacks the imprint of loving familiarity. He is clearly no farmer: every man who has put his hand to the plough (*_aratori crede_*) sees it. Your blood does not tingle at his story of Boreas, nor a dreamy languor creep over you when he talks of sunny south-winds.

Had he written exclusively of bees, or trees, or flowers, there would have been a charming murmur, like the *_susurrus_* of the poets,--and a fragrance as of crushed heaps of lilies and jonquils. But Daubeny approaches fanning as a good surgeon approaches a *_cadaver_*. He disarticulates the joints superbly; but there is no tremulous intensity. The bystanders do not feel the thrill with which they see a man bare his arm for a capital operation upon a live and palpitating body.

* * * * *

From the time of Palladius to the time of Pietro Crescenzi is a period of a thousand years, a period as dreary and impenetrable as the snow-cloud through which I see faintly a few spires staggering: so along the pages of Muratori's interminable annals gaunt figures come and go; but they are not the figures of farmers.

Goths, wars, famines, and plague succeed each other in ghastly procession. Boëthius lifts, indeed, a little rural plaint from out of the gloom,--

"Felix nimium prior ætas,
Contenta fidelibus arvis,"[18]--

but the dungeon closes over him; and there are outstanding orders of Charlemagne which look as if he had an eye to the crops of Italy, and to a good vegetable stew with his Transalpine dinners,--but for the most part the land is waste. I see some such monster as Eccelino reaping a harvest of blood. I see Lombards pouring down from the mountain-gates, with falcons on their thumbs, ready to pounce upon the purple *_columbæ_* that trace back their lineage to the doves Virgil may have fed in the streets of Mantua. I see torrents of people, the third of them women,

driven mad by some fanatical outcry, sweeping over the whole breadth of Italy, and consuming all green things as a fire consumes stubble. Think of what the fine villa of Pliny would have been, with its boxwood bowers and floating dishes, under the press of such crusaders! It was a precarious time for agricultural investments: I know nothing that could match it, unless it may have been last summer's harvests in the valley of the Shenandoah.

Upon a parchment (_strumento_) of Ferrara, bearing date A. D. 1113, (Annals of Muratori,) I find a memorandum or contract which looks like reviving civilization. "_Terram autem illam quam roncabo, frui debeo per annos tres; postea reddam serraticum._" The Latin is stiff, but the sense is sound. "If I grub up wild land, I shall hold it three years for pay."

* * * * *

I shall make no apology for introducing next to the reader the "Geoponica Geoponicorum,"--a somewhat extraordinary collection of agricultural opinions, usually attributed, in a loose way, to the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who held the Byzantine throne about the middle of the tenth century. It was undoubtedly under the order of Constantine that the collection took its present shape; but whether a collection under the same name had not previously existed, and, if so, to whom is to be credited the authorship, are questions which have been discussed through a wilderness of Greek and Roman type, by the various editors.

The edition before me (that of Niclas, Leipsic) gives no less than a hundred pages of prolegomena, prefaces, introductory observations, with notes to each and all, interlacing the pages into a motley of patchwork; the whole preceded by two, and followed by five stately dedications. The weight of authority points to Cassianus Bassus, a Bithynian, as the real compiler,--notwithstanding his name is attached to particular chapters of the book, and notwithstanding he lived as early as the fifth century. Other critics attribute the collection to Dionysius Uticensis, who is cited by both Varro and Columella. The question is unsettled, and is not worth the settling.

My own opinion--in which, however, Niclas and Needham do not share--is,

that the Emperor Porphyrogenitus, in addition to his historical and judicial labors,[19] wishing to mass together the best agricultural opinions of the day, expressed that wish to some trusted Byzantine official (we may say his Commissioner of Patents). Whereupon the Byzantine official (commissioner) goes to some hungry agricultural friend, of the Chersonesus, and lays before him the plan, with promise of a round Byzantian stipend. The agricultural friend goes lovingly to the work, and discovers some old compilation of Bassus or of Dionysius, into which he whips a few modern phrases, attributes a few chapters to the virtual compiler of the whole, makes one or two adroit allusions to local scenes, and carries the result to the Byzantine official (commissioner). The official (commissioner) has confidence in the opinions and virtues of his agricultural friend, and indorses the book, paying over the stipend, which it is found necessary to double, by reason of the unexpected cost of execution. The official (commissioner) presents the report to the Emperor, who receives it gratefully,--at the same tune approving the bill of costs, which has grown into a quadruple of the original estimates.

This hypothesis will explain the paragraphs which so puzzle Niclas and Needham; it explains the evident interpolations, and the local allusions. The only extravagance in the hypothesis is its assumption that the officials of Byzantium were as rapacious as our own.

Thus far, I have imagined a certain analogy between the work in view and the "Patent Office Agricultural Reports." The analogy stops here: the "Geoponica" is a good book. It is in no sense to be regarded as a work of the tenth century, or as one strictly Byzantine: nearly half the authors named are of Western origin, and I find none dating later than the fifth century,--while many, as Apuleius, Fiorentinus, Africanus, and the poor brothers Quintilii, who died under the stab of Commodus, belong to a period preceding that of Palladius. Aratus and Democritus (of Abdera) again, who are cited, are veterans of the old Greek school, who might have contributed as well to the agriculture of Thrace or Macedonia in the days of Philip as in the days of the Porphyrogenitus.

The first book, of meteorologic phenomena, is nearly identical in its teachings with those of Aratus, Varro, and Virgil.

The subject of field-culture is opened with the standard maxim,

repeated by all the old writers, that the master's eye is invaluable.[20] The doctrine of rotation, or frequent change of crops, is laid down with unmistakable precision. A steep for seed (hellebore) is recommended, to guard against the depredations of birds or mice.

In the second book, in certain chapters credited to Fiorentinus, I find, among other valuable manures mentioned, sea-weed and tide-drift, ([Greek: Ta ek tês thalassês de ekbrassomena bryodê],) which I do not recall in any other of the old writers. He also recommends the refuse of leather-dressers, and a mode of promoting putrefaction in the compost-heap, which would almost seem to be stolen from "Bommer's Method." He further urges the diversion of turbid rills, after rains, over grass lands, and altogether makes a better compend of this branch of the subject than can be found in the Roman writers proper.

Grain should be cut before it is fully ripe, as the meal is the sweeter. What correspondent of our agricultural papers, suggesting this as a novelty, could believe that it stood in Greek type as early as ever Greek types were set?

A farm foreman should be apt to rise early, should win the respect of his men, should fear to tell an untruth, regard religious observances, and not drink too hard.

Three or four books are devoted to a very full discussion of the vine, and of wines,--not differing materially, however, from the Columellan advice. In discussing the moral aspects of the matter, this Geponic author enumerates other things which will intoxicate as well as wine,--even some waters; also the wine made from barley and wheat, which barbarians drink. Old men, he says, are easily made drunk; women not easily, by reason of temperament; but by drinking enough they may come to it.

Where the discourse turns upon pears, (Lib. X. Cap. xxiii.,) it is urged, that, if you wish specially good fruit, you should bore a hole through the trunk at the ground, and drive in a plug of either oak or beech, and draw the earth over it. If it does not heal well, wash for a fortnight with the lees of old wine: in any event, the wine-lees will help the flavor of the fruit. Almost identical directions are to be found in Palladius, (Tit. XXV.,) but the above is credited to Diophanes,

who lived in Asia Minor a full century before Christ.

Book XI. opens with flowers and evergreens, introduced (by a Latin translation) in a mellifluous roll of genitives:--"_plantationem rosarum, et liliorum, et violarum, et reliquorum florum odoratorum_." Thereafter is given the pretty tradition, that red roses came of nectar spilled from heaven. Love, who bore the celestial vintage, tripped a wing, and overset the vase; and the nectar, spilling on the valleys of the earth, bubbled up in roses. Next we have this kindred story of the lilies. Jupiter wished to make his boy Hercules (born of a mortal) one of the gods; so he snatches him from the bosom of his earthly mother, Alemena, and bears him to the bosom of the godlike Juno. The milk is spilled from the full-mouthed boy, as he traverses the sky, (making the Milky Way,) and what drops below stars and clouds, and touches earth, stains the ground with--lilies.

In the chapter upon pot-herbs are some of those allusions to the climate of Constantinople which may have served to accredit the work in the Byzantine court. I find no extraordinary methods of kitchen-garden culture,--unless I except the treatment of musk-melon seeds to a steep of milk and honey, in order to improve the flavor of the fruit. (Cap. xx.) The remaining chapters relate to ordinary domestic animals, with diversions to stags, camels, hare, poisons, scorpions, and serpents. I can cheerfully commend the work to those who have a snowy day on their hands, good eyesight, and a love for the subject.

* * * * *

And now, while the snow lasts, let us take one look at Messer Pietro Crescenzi, a Bolognese of the fourteenth century. My copy of him is a little, fat, unctuous, parchment-bound book of 1534, bought upon a street stall under the walls of the University of Bologna.

Through whose hands may it not have passed since its printing! Sometimes I seem to snuff in it the taint of a dirty-handed friar, who loved his pot-herbs better than his breviary, and plotted his yearly garden on some shelf of the hills that look down on Castagnolo: other times I scent only the mould and the damp of some monastery shelf, that guarded it quietly and cleanly, while red-handed war raged around the walls.

Crescenzi was a man of good family in Bologna, being nephew of Crescenzi di Crescenzo, who died in 1268, an ambassador in Venice. Pietro was educated to the law, and, wearying of the civil commotions in his native town, accepted judicial positions in the independent cities of Italy,--Pisa and Asti among others; and after thirty years of absence, in which, as he says, he had read many authors,[21] and seen many sorts of farming, he gives his book to the world.

Its arrangement is very similar to that of Palladius, to which he makes frequent reference. There is long and quaint talk of situations, breezes, cellar-digging, and wells; but in the matter of irrigation and pipe-laying he is clearly in advance of the Roman writers. He discourses upon tiles, and gives a cement for making water-tight their junction,--"*Calcina viva intrisa con olio.*" (Lib. I. Cap. ix.) He adds good rules for mortar-making, and advises that the timber for house-building be cut in November or December in the old of the moon.

In matters of physiology he shows a near approach to modern views: he insists that food for plants must be in a liquid form.[22]

He quotes Columella's rule for twenty-four loads (*carrette*) of manure to hill-lands per acre, and eighteen to level land; and adds,--"Our people put the double of this,"--"*I nostri mettano più chel doppio.*"

But the book of our friend Crescenzi is interesting, not so much for its maxims of agronomic wisdom as for its association with one of the most eventful periods of Italian history. The new language of the Peninsula[23] was just now crystallizing into shape, and was presently to receive the stamp of currency from the hands of Dante and Boccaccio. A thriving commerce through the ports of Venice and Amalfi demanded all the products of the hill-sides. Milan, then having a population of two hundred thousand, had turned a great river into the fields,--which to this day irrigates thousands of acres of rice-lands. Wheat was grown in profusion, at that time, on fields which are now desolated by the malaria, or by indolence. In the days of Crescenzi, gunpowder was burned for the first time in battle; and for the first time crops of grain were paid for in bills of exchange. All the Peninsula was vibrating with the throbs of a new and more splendid life. The art that had cropped out of the fashionable schools of Byzantium was fast putting them in eclipse; and before Crescenzi died, if he loved art on canvas as he loved art in

gardens, he must have heard admiringly of Cimabue, and Giotto, and Orcagna.

* * * * *

In 1360 a certain Paganino Bonafede composed a poem called "Il Tesoro de' Rustici"; but I believe it was never published; and Tiraboschi calls it "_poco felice_." If we could only bar publicity to all the _poco felice_ verses!

In the middle of the fifteenth century the Florentine Poggio says some good things in a rural way; and still later, that whimsical, disagreeable Politiano, who was a pet cub of Lorenzo de' Medici, published his "Rusticus." Roscoe says, with his usual strained hyperbole, that it is inferior in kind only to the Georgics. The fact is, it compares with the Georgics as the vilest of the Medici compare with the grandest of the Cæsars.

The young Michele Verini, of the same period, has given, in one of his few remaining letters, an eloquent description of the Cajano farm of Lorenzo de' Medici. It lay between Florence and Pistoia. The river Ombrone skirted its fields. It was so successfully irrigated, that three crops of grain grew in a year. Its barns had stone floors, walls with moat, and towers like a castle. The cows he kept there (for ewes were now superseded) were equal to the supply of the entire city of Florence. Hogs were fed upon the whey; and peacocks and pheasant innumerable roamed through the woods.

Politiano also touches upon the same theme; but the prose of young Verini is better, because more explicit, than the verse of Politiano.

* * * * *

While I write, wandering in fancy to that fair plain where Florence sits a queen, with her girdle of shining rivers, and her garland of olive-bearing hills,----the snow is passing. The spires have staggered plainly and stiffly into sight. Again I can count them, one by one. I have brought as many authors to the front as there are spires staring at me from the snow.

Let me marshal them once more:--Verini, the young Florentine;
Politiano,[24] who cannot live in peace with the wife of his patron;
Poggio, the Tuscan; Crescenzi, the magistrate and farmer joined; the
half-score of dead men who lie between the covers of the "Geoponica";
the martyr Boëthius, who, under the consolations of a serene, perhaps
Christian philosophy, cannot forget the charm of the fields; Palladius,
who is more full than original; Pliny the Consul, and the friend of
Tacitus; Horace, whose very laugh is brimming with the buxom cheer of
the country; and last,--Virgil.

I hear no such sweet bugle-note as his along all the line!

Hark!--

"Claudite jam rivos, pueri, sat prata biberunt."

Even so: _Claudite jam libros, parvuli!_--Shut up the books, my little
ones! Enough of this.

FOOTNOTES:

[13] "_Lusimus_: hæc propter _Culicis_ sint carmina dicta."

[14] Of course, I reckon the

"Exceptantque leves auras; et sæpe sine ullis," etc.,

(Lib. III. 274,) as among the superstitions.

[15] The same writer, under Februarius, Tit. XVII., gives a very curious
method of grafting the willow, so that it may bear peaches.

[16] Praise big farms; stick by little ones.

[17] This, with other odes, is prettily turned by Sig. Pietro Bussolino,
and given as an appendix to the _Serie degli Scritti in Dialecto
Venez._, by Bart. Gamba.

[18] _De Consol. Phil._ Lib. II.

[19] See Gibbon,--opening of Chapter LIII.

[20] As a curious illustration of the rhetoric of the different agronomes, I give the various wordings of this universal maxim.

The "Geoponica" has,--[Greek: "Pollo ton agron ameino poiei despotou synechês parousia."] Lib. II. Cap. i.

Columella says,--"Ne ista quidem præsidia tantum pollent, quantum vel una præsentia domini." I. i. 18.

Cato says,--"Frons occipitio prior est." Cap. iv.

Palladius puts it,--"Præsentia domini provectus est agri." I. vi.

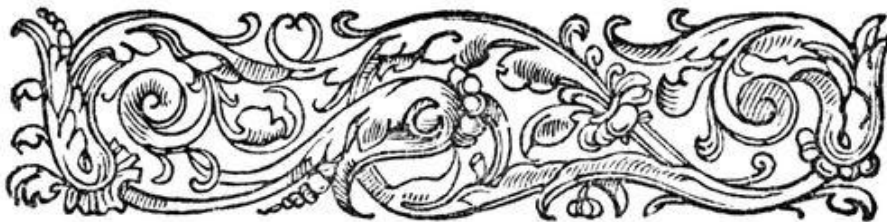
And the elder Pliny writes,--"Majores ferthissimum in agro oculum domini esse dixerunt."

[21] "E molti libri d'antichi e de' novelli savi lessi e studiai, e diverse e varie operazioni de' coltivalori delle terre vidi e conobbi."

[22] "Il proprio cibo delle piante sara aleuno humido ben mischiato." Cap. xiii.

[23] Crescenzi'a book was written in Latin, but was very shortly after (perhaps by himself) rendered into the street-tongue of Italy.

[24] See Roscoe, _Life of Lorenzo de' Medici_, Chap. VIII.



THE DIARY OF A MAN OF FIFTY

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Florence, April 5th, 1874.—They told me I should find Italy greatly changed; and in seven-and-twenty years there is room for changes. But to me everything is so perfectly the same that I seem to be living my youth over again; all the forgotten impressions of that enchanting time come back to me. At the moment they were powerful enough; but they afterwards faded away. What in the world became of them? Whatever becomes of such things, in the long intervals of consciousness? Where do they hide themselves away? in what unvisited cupboards and crannies of our being do they preserve themselves? They are like the lines of a letter written in sympathetic ink; hold the letter to the fire for a while and the grateful warmth brings out the invisible words. It is the warmth of this yellow sun of Florence that has been restoring the text of my own young romance; the thing has been lying before me today as a clear, fresh page. There have been moments during the last ten years when I have felt so portentously old, so fagged and finished, that I should have taken as a very bad joke any intimation that this present sense of juvenility was still in store for me. It won't last, at any rate; so I had better make the best of it. But I confess it surprises me. I have led too serious a life; but that perhaps, after all, preserves one's youth. At all events, I have travelled too far, I have worked too hard, I have lived in brutal climates and associated with tiresome people. When a man has reached his fifty-second year without being, materially, the worse for wear—when he has fair health, a fair fortune, a tidy conscience and a complete exemption from embarrassing relatives—I suppose he is bound, in delicacy, to write himself happy. But I confess I shirk this obligation. I have not been miserable; I won't go so far as to say that—or at least as to write it. But happiness—positive happiness—would have been something different. I don't know that it would have been better, by all measurements—that it would have left me better off at the present time. But it certainly would have made this difference—that I should not have been reduced, in pursuit of pleasant images, to disinter a buried episode of more than a quarter of a century ago. I should have found entertainment more—what shall I call it?—more contemporaneous. I should have had a wife and children, and I should not be in the way of making, as the French say, infidelities to the present. Of course it's a great gain to have had an escape, not to have committed an act of thumping folly; and I suppose that, whatever serious step one might have taken at twenty-five, after a struggle, and with a violent effort, and however one's conduct might appear to be justified by events, there would always remain a certain element of regret; a certain sense of loss lurking in the sense of gain; a tendency to wonder, rather wishfully, what

might have been. What might have been, in this case, would, without doubt, have been very sad, and what has been has been very cheerful and comfortable; but there are nevertheless two or three questions I might ask myself. Why, for instance, have I never married—why have I never been able to care for any woman as I cared for that one? Ah, why are the mountains blue and why is the sunshine warm? Happiness mitigated by impertinent conjectures—that's about my ticket.

6th.—I knew it wouldn't last; it's already passing away. But I have spent a delightful day; I have been strolling all over the place. Everything reminds me of something else, and yet of itself at the same time; my imagination makes a great circuit and comes back to the starting-point. There is that well-remembered odour of spring in the air, and the flowers, as they used to be, are gathered into great sheaves and stacks, all along the rugged base of the Strozzi Palace. I wandered for an hour in the Boboli Gardens; we went there several times together. I remember all those days individually; they seem to me as yesterday. I found the corner where she always chose to sit—the bench of sun-warmed marble, in front of the screen of ilex, with that exuberant statue of Pomona just beside it. The place is exactly the same, except that poor Pomona has lost one of her tapering fingers. I sat there for half an hour, and it was strange how near to me she seemed. The place was perfectly empty—that is, it was filled with her. I closed my eyes and listened; I could almost hear the rustle of her dress on the gravel. Why do we make such an ado about death? What is it, after all, but a sort of refinement of life? She died ten years ago, and yet, as I sat there in the sunny stillness, she was a palpable, audible presence. I went afterwards into the gallery of the palace, and wandered for an hour from room to room. The same great pictures hung in the same places, and the same dark frescoes arched above them. Twice, of old, I went there with her; she had a great understanding of art. She understood all sorts of things. Before the Madonna of the Chair I stood a long time. The face is not a particle like hers, and yet it reminded me of her. But everything does that. We stood and looked at it together once for half an hour; I remember perfectly what she said.

8th.—Yesterday I felt blue—blue and bored; and when I got up this morning I had half a mind to leave Florence. But I went out into the street, beside the Arno, and looked up and down—looked at the yellow river and the violet hills, and then decided to remain—or rather, I decided nothing. I simply stood gazing at the beauty of Florence, and before I had gazed my fill I was in good-humour again, and it was too late to start for Rome. I strolled along the quay, where something presently happened that rewarded me for staying. I stopped in front of a little jeweller's shop, where a great many objects in mosaic were exposed in the window; I stood there for some minutes—I don't know why, for I have no taste for

mosaic. In a moment a little girl came and stood beside me—a little girl with a frowsy Italian head, carrying a basket. I turned away, but, as I turned, my eyes happened to fall on her basket. It was covered with a napkin, and on the napkin was pinned a piece of paper, inscribed with an address. This address caught my glance—there was a name on it I knew. It was very legibly written—evidently by a scribe who had made up in zeal what was lacking in skill. Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli, Via Ghibellina—so ran the superscription; I looked at it for some moments; it caused me a sudden emotion. Presently the little girl, becoming aware of my attention, glanced up at me, wondering, with a pair of timid brown eyes.

“Are you carrying your basket to the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

The child stared at me. “To the Countess Scarabelli.”

“Do you know the Countess?”

“Know her?” murmured the child, with an air of small dismay.

“I mean, have you seen her?”

“Yes, I have seen her.” And then, in a moment, with a sudden soft smile—“E bella!” said the little girl. She was beautiful herself as she said it.

“Precisely; and is she fair or dark?”

The child kept gazing at me. “Bionda—bionda,” she answered, looking about into the golden sunshine for a comparison.

“And is she young?”

“She is not young—like me. But she is not old like—like—”

“Like me, eh? And is she married?”

The little girl began to look wise. “I have never seen the Signor Conte.”

“And she lives in Via Ghibellina?”

“Sicuro. In a beautiful palace.”

I had one more question to ask, and I pointed it with certain copper coins. “Tell me a little—is she good?”

The child inspected a moment the contents of her little brown fist. “It’s you who are good,” she answered.

“Ah, but the Countess?” I repeated.

My informant lowered her big brown eyes, with an air of conscientious meditation that was inexpressibly quaint. “To me she appears so,” she said at last, looking up.

“Ah, then, she must be so,” I said, “because, for your age, you are very intelligent.” And having delivered myself of this compliment I walked away and left the little girl counting her soldi.

I walked back to the hotel, wondering how I could learn something about the Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli. In the doorway I found the innkeeper, and near him stood a young man whom I immediately perceived to be a compatriot, and with whom, apparently, he had been in conversation.

“I wonder whether you can give me a piece of information,” I said to the landlord. “Do you know anything about the Count Salvi-Scarabelli?”

The landlord looked down at his boots, then slowly raised his shoulders, with a melancholy smile. “I have many regrets, dear sir—”

“You don’t know the name?”

“I know the name, assuredly. But I don’t know the gentleman.”

I saw that my question had attracted the attention of the young Englishman, who looked at me with a good deal of earnestness. He was apparently satisfied with what he saw, for he presently decided to speak.

“The Count Scarabelli is dead,” he said, very gravely.

I looked at him a moment; he was a pleasing young fellow. “And his widow lives,” I observed, “in Via Ghibellina?”

“I daresay that is the name of the street.” He was a handsome young Englishman, but he was also an awkward one; he wondered who I was and what I wanted, and he did me the honour to perceive that, as regards these points, my appearance was reassuring. But he hesitated, very properly, to talk with a perfect stranger about a lady whom he knew, and he had not the art to conceal his hesitation. I instantly felt it to be singular that though he regarded me as a perfect stranger, I had not the same feeling about him. Whether it was that I had seen him before, or simply that I was struck with his agreeable young face—at any rate, I felt myself, as they say here, in sympathy with him. If I have seen him before I don’t remember the occasion, and neither, apparently, does he; I suppose it’s only a part of the feeling I have had the last three days about everything. It was this feeling that made me suddenly act as if I had known him a long time.

“Do you know the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

He looked at me a little, and then, without resenting the freedom of my question—
“The Countess Scarabelli, you mean,” he said.

“Yes,” I answered; “she’s the daughter.”

“The daughter is a little girl.”

“She must be grown up now. She must be—let me see—close upon thirty.”

My young Englishman began to smile. “Of whom are you speaking?”

“I was speaking of the daughter,” I said, understanding his smile. “But I was thinking of the mother.”

“Of the mother?”

“Of a person I knew twenty-seven years ago—the most charming woman I have ever known. She was the Countess Salvi—she lived in a wonderful old house in Via Ghibellina.”

“A wonderful old house!” my young Englishman repeated.

“She had a little girl,” I went on; “and the little girl was very fair, like her mother; and the mother and daughter had the same name—Bianca.” I stopped and looked at my companion, and he blushed a little. “And Bianca Salvi,” I continued, “was

the most charming woman in the world.” He blushed a little more, and I laid my hand on his shoulder. “Do you know why I tell you this? Because you remind me of what I was when I knew her—when I loved her.” My poor young Englishman gazed at me with a sort of embarrassed and fascinated stare, and still I went on. “I say that’s the reason I told you this—but you’ll think it a strange reason. You remind me of my younger self. You needn’t resent that—I was a charming young fellow. The Countess Salvi thought so. Her daughter thinks the same of you.”

Instantly, instinctively, he raised his hand to my arm. “Truly?”

“Ah, you are wonderfully like me!” I said, laughing. “That was just my state of mind. I wanted tremendously to please her.” He dropped his hand and looked away, smiling, but with an air of ingenuous confusion which quickened my interest in him. “You don’t know what to make of me,” I pursued. “You don’t know why a stranger should suddenly address you in this way and pretend to read your thoughts. Doubtless you think me a little cracked. Perhaps I am eccentric; but it’s not so bad as that. I have lived about the world a great deal, following my profession, which is that of a soldier. I have been in India, in Africa, in Canada, and I have lived a good deal alone. That inclines people, I think, to sudden bursts of confidence. A week ago I came into Italy, where I spent six months when I was your age. I came straight to Florence—I was eager to see it again, on account of associations. They have been crowding upon me ever so thickly. I have taken the liberty of giving you a hint of them.” The young man inclined himself a little, in silence, as if he had been struck with a sudden respect. He stood and looked away for a moment at the river and the mountains. “It’s very beautiful,” I said.

“Oh, it’s enchanting,” he murmured.

“That’s the way I used to talk. But that’s nothing to you.”

He glanced at me again. “On the contrary, I like to hear.”

“Well, then, let us take a walk. If you too are staying at this inn, we are fellow-travellers. We will walk down the Arno to the Cascine. There are several things I should like to ask of you.”

My young Englishman assented with an air of almost filial confidence, and we strolled for an hour beside the river and through the shady alleys of that lovely wilderness. We had a great deal of talk: it’s not only myself, it’s my whole situation over again.

“Are you very fond of Italy?” I asked.

He hesitated a moment. “One can’t express that.”

“Just so; I couldn’t express it. I used to try—I used to write verses. On the subject of Italy I was very ridiculous.”

“So am I ridiculous,” said my companion.

“No, my dear boy,” I answered, “we are not ridiculous; we are two very reasonable, superior people.”

“The first time one comes—as I have done—it’s a revelation.”

“Oh, I remember well; one never forgets it. It’s an introduction to beauty.”

“And it must be a great pleasure,” said my young friend, “to come back.”

“Yes, fortunately the beauty is always here. What form of it,” I asked, “do you prefer?”

My companion looked a little mystified; and at last he said, “I am very fond of the pictures.”

“So was I. And among the pictures, which do you like best?”

“Oh, a great many.”

“So did I; but I had certain favourites.”

Again the young man hesitated a little, and then he confessed that the group of painters he preferred, on the whole, to all others, was that of the early Florentines.

I was so struck with this that I stopped short. “That was exactly my taste!” And then I passed my hand into his arm and we went our way again.

We sat down on an old stone bench in the Cascine, and a solemn blank-eyed Hermes, with wrinkles accentuated by the dust of ages, stood above us and listened to our talk.

“The Countess Salvi died ten years ago,” I said.

My companion admitted that he had heard her daughter say so.

“After I knew her she married again,” I added. “The Count Salvi died before I knew her—a couple of years after their marriage.”

“Yes, I have heard that.”

“And what else have you heard?”

My companion stared at me; he had evidently heard nothing.

“She was a very interesting woman—there are a great many things to be said about her. Later, perhaps, I will tell you. Has the daughter the same charm?”

“You forget,” said my young man, smiling, “that I have never seen the mother.”

“Very true. I keep confounding. But the daughter—how long have you known her?”

“Only since I have been here. A very short time.”

“A week?”

For a moment he said nothing. “A month.”

“That’s just the answer I should have made. A week, a month—it was all the same to me.”

“I think it is more than a month,” said the young man.

“It’s probably six. How did you make her acquaintance?”

“By a letter—an introduction given me by a friend in England.”

“The analogy is complete,” I said. “But the friend who gave me my letter to Madame de Salvi died many years ago. He, too, admired her greatly. I don’t know why it never came into my mind that her daughter might be living in

Florence. Somehow I took for granted it was all over. I never thought of the little girl; I never heard what had become of her. I walked past the palace yesterday and saw that it was occupied; but I took for granted it had changed hands.”

“The Countess Scarabelli,” said my friend, “brought it to her husband as her marriage-portion.”

“I hope he appreciated it! There is a fountain in the court, and there is a charming old garden beyond it. The Countess’s sitting-room looks into that garden. The staircase is of white marble, and there is a medallion by Luca della Robbia set into the wall at the place where it makes a bend. Before you come into the drawing-room you stand a moment in a great vaulted place hung round with faded tapestry, paved with bare tiles, and furnished only with three chairs. In the drawing-room, above the fireplace, is a superb Andrea del Sarto. The furniture is covered with pale sea-green.”

My companion listened to all this.

“The Andrea del Sarto is there; it’s magnificent. But the furniture is in pale red.”

“Ah, they have changed it, then—in twenty-seven years.”

“And there’s a portrait of Madame de Salvi,” continued my friend.

I was silent a moment. “I should like to see that.”

He too was silent. Then he asked, “Why don’t you go and see it? If you knew the mother so well, why don’t you call upon the daughter?”

“From what you tell me I am afraid.”

“What have I told you to make you afraid?”

I looked a little at his ingenuous countenance. “The mother was a very dangerous woman.”

The young Englishman began to blush again. “The daughter is not,” he said.

“Are you very sure?”

He didn't say he was sure, but he presently inquired in what way the Countess Salvi had been dangerous.

"You must not ask me that," I answered "for after all, I desire to remember only what was good in her." And as we walked back I begged him to render me the service of mentioning my name to his friend, and of saying that I had known her mother well, and that I asked permission to come and see her.

9th.—I have seen that poor boy half a dozen times again, and a most amiable young fellow he is. He continues to represent to me, in the most extraordinary manner, my own young identity; the correspondence is perfect at all points, save that he is a better boy than I. He is evidently acutely interested in his Countess, and leads quite the same life with her that I led with Madame de Salvi. He goes to see her every evening and stays half the night; these Florentines keep the most extraordinary hours. I remember, towards 3 A.M., Madame de Salvi used to turn me out.—"Come, come," she would say, "it's time to go. If you were to stay later people might talk." I don't know at what time he comes home, but I suppose his evening seems as short as mine did. Today he brought me a message from his Contessa—a very gracious little speech. She remembered often to have heard her mother speak of me—she called me her English friend. All her mother's friends were dear to her, and she begged I would do her the honour to come and see her. She is always at home of an evening. Poor young Stanmer (he is of the Devonshire Stanmers—a great property) reported this speech verbatim, and of course it can't in the least signify to him that a poor grizzled, battered soldier, old enough to be his father, should come to call upon his inammorata. But I remember how it used to matter to me when other men came; that's a point of difference. However, it's only because I'm so old. At twenty-five I shouldn't have been afraid of myself at fifty-two. Camerino was thirty-four—and then the others! She was always at home in the evening, and they all used to come. They were old Florentine names. But she used to let me stay after them all; she thought an old English name as good. What a transcendent coquette! . . . But basta così as she used to say. I meant to go tonight to Casa Salvi, but I couldn't bring myself to the point. I don't know what I'm afraid of; I used to be in a hurry enough to go there once. I suppose I am afraid of the very look of the place—of the old rooms, the old walls. I shall go tomorrow night. I am afraid of the very echoes.

10th.—She has the most extraordinary resemblance to her mother. When I went in I was tremendously startled; I stood staring at her. I have just come home; it is past midnight; I have been all the evening at Casa Salvi. It is very warm—my window is open—I can look out on the river gliding past in the starlight. So, of

old, when I came home, I used to stand and look out. There are the same cypresses on the opposite hills.

Poor young Stanmer was there, and three or four other admirers; they all got up when I came in. I think I had been talked about, and there was some curiosity. But why should I have been talked about? They were all youngish men—none of them of my time. She is a wonderful likeness of her mother; I couldn't get over it. Beautiful like her mother, and yet with the same faults in her face; but with her mother's perfect head and brow and sympathetic, almost pitying, eyes. Her face has just that peculiarity of her mother's, which, of all human countenances that I have ever known, was the one that passed most quickly and completely from the expression of gaiety to that of repose. Repose in her face always suggested sadness; and while you were watching it with a kind of awe, and wondering of what tragic secret it was the token, it kindled, on the instant, into a radiant Italian smile. The Countess Scarabelli's smiles tonight, however, were almost uninterrupted. She greeted me—divinely, as her mother used to do; and young Stanmer sat in the corner of the sofa—as I used to do—and watched her while she talked. She is thin and very fair, and was dressed in light, vaporous black that completes the resemblance. The house, the rooms, are almost absolutely the same; there may be changes of detail, but they don't modify the general effect. There are the same precious pictures on the walls of the salon—the same great dusky fresco in the concave ceiling. The daughter is not rich, I suppose, any more than the mother. The furniture is worn and faded, and I was admitted by a solitary servant, who carried a twinkling taper before me up the great dark marble staircase.

"I have often heard of you," said the Countess, as I sat down near her; "my mother often spoke of you."

"Often?" I answered. "I am surprised at that."

"Why are you surprised? Were you not good friends?"

"Yes, for a certain time—very good friends. But I was sure she had forgotten me."

"She never forgot," said the Countess, looking at me intently and smiling. "She was not like that."

"She was not like most other women in any way," I declared.

“Ah, she was charming,” cried the Countess, rattling open her fan. “I have always been very curious to see you. I have received an impression of you.”

“A good one, I hope.”

She looked at me, laughing, and not answering this: it was just her mother’s trick.

“‘My Englishman,’ she used to call you—‘il mio Inglese.’”

“I hope she spoke of me kindly,” I insisted.

The Countess, still laughing, gave a little shrug balancing her hand to and fro.

“So-so; I always supposed you had had a quarrel. You don’t mind my being frank like this—eh?”

“I delight in it; it reminds me of your mother.”

“Every one tells me that. But I am not clever like her. You will see for yourself.”

“That speech,” I said, “completes the resemblance. She was always pretending she was not clever, and in reality—”

“In reality she was an angel, eh? To escape from dangerous comparisons I will admit, then, that I am clever. That will make a difference. But let us talk of you. You are very—how shall I say it?—very eccentric.”

“Is that what your mother told you?”

“To tell the truth, she spoke of you as a great original. But aren’t all Englishmen eccentric? All except that one!” and the Countess pointed to poor Stanmer, in his corner of the sofa.

“Oh, I know just what he is,” I said.

“He’s as quiet as a lamb—he’s like all the world,” cried the Countess.

“Like all the world—yes. He is in love with you.”

She looked at me with sudden gravity. “I don’t object to your saying that for all the world—but I do for him.”

“Well,” I went on, “he is peculiar in this: he is rather afraid of you.”

Instantly she began to smile; she turned her face toward Stanmer. He had seen that we were talking about him; he coloured and got up—then came toward us.

“I like men who are afraid of nothing,” said our hostess.

“I know what you want,” I said to Stanmer. “You want to know what the Signora Contessa says about you.”

Stanmer looked straight into her face, very gravely. “I don’t care a straw what she says.”

“You are almost a match for the Signora Contessa,” I answered. “She declares she doesn’t care a pin’s head what you think.”

“I recognise the Countess’s style!” Stanmer exclaimed, turning away.

“One would think,” said the Countess, “that you were trying to make a quarrel between us.”

I watched him move away to another part of the great saloon; he stood in front of the Andrea del Sarto, looking up at it. But he was not seeing it; he was listening to what we might say. I often stood there in just that way. “He can’t quarrel with you, any more than I could have quarrelled with your mother.”

“Ah, but you did. Something painful passed between you.”

“Yes, it was painful, but it was not a quarrel. I went away one day and never saw her again. That was all.”

The Countess looked at me gravely. “What do you call it when a man does that?”

“It depends upon the case.”

“Sometimes,” said the Countess in French, “it’s a lâcheté.”

“Yes, and sometimes it’s an act of wisdom.”

“And sometimes,” rejoined the Countess, “it’s a mistake.”

I shook my head. “For me it was no mistake.”

She began to laugh again. “Caro Signore, you’re a great original. What had my poor mother done to you?”

I looked at our young Englishman, who still had his back turned to us and was staring up at the picture. “I will tell you some other time,” I said.

“I shall certainly remind you; I am very curious to know.” Then she opened and shut her fan two or three times, still looking at me. What eyes they have! “Tell me a little,” she went on, “if I may ask without indiscretion. Are you married?”

“No, Signora Contessa.”

“Isn’t that at least a mistake?”

“Do I look very unhappy?”

She dropped her head a little to one side. “For an Englishman—no!”

“Ah,” said I, laughing, “you are quite as clever as your mother.”

“And they tell me that you are a great soldier,” she continued; “you have lived in India. It was very kind of you, so far away, to have remembered our poor dear Italy.”

“One always remembers Italy; the distance makes no difference. I remembered it well the day I heard of your mother’s death!”

“Ah, that was a sorrow!” said the Countess. “There’s not a day that I don’t weep for her. But *che vuole*? She’s a saint in paradise.”

“Sicuro,” I answered; and I looked some time at the ground. “But tell me about yourself, dear lady,” I asked at last, raising my eyes. “You have also had the sorrow of losing your husband.”

“I am a poor widow, as you see. *Che vuole*? My husband died after three years of marriage.”

I waited for her to remark that the late Count Scarabelli was also a saint in paradise, but I waited in vain.

“That was like your distinguished father,” I said.

“Yes, he too died young. I can’t be said to have known him; I was but of the age of my own little girl. But I weep for him all the more.”

Again I was silent for a moment.

“It was in India too,” I said presently, “that I heard of your mother’s second marriage.”

The Countess raised her eyebrows.

“In India, then, one hears of everything! Did that news please you?”

“Well, since you ask me—no.”

“I understand that,” said the Countess, looking at her open fan. “I shall not marry again like that.”

“That’s what your mother said to me,” I ventured to observe.

She was not offended, but she rose from her seat and stood looking at me a moment. Then—“You should not have gone away!” she exclaimed. I stayed for another hour; it is a very pleasant house.

Two or three of the men who were sitting there seemed very civil and intelligent; one of them was a major of engineers, who offered me a profusion of information upon the new organisation of the Italian army. While he talked, however, I was observing our hostess, who was talking with the others; very little, I noticed, with her young Inglese. She is altogether charming—full of frankness and freedom, of that inimitable disinvoltura which in an Englishwoman would be vulgar, and which in her is simply the perfection of apparent spontaneity. But for all her spontaneity she’s as subtle as a needle-point, and knows tremendously well what she is about. If she is not a consummate coquette . . . What had she in her head when she said that I should not have gone away?—Poor little Stanmer didn’t go away. I left him there at midnight.

12th.—I found him today sitting in the church of Santa Croce, into which I wandered to escape from the heat of the sun.

In the nave it was cool and dim; he was staring at the blaze of candles on the great altar, and thinking, I am sure, of his incomparable Countess. I sat down beside him, and after a while, as if to avoid the appearance of eagerness, he asked me how I had enjoyed my visit to Casa Salvi, and what I thought of the padrona.

“I think half a dozen things,” I said, “but I can only tell you one now. She’s an enchantress. You shall hear the rest when we have left the church.”

“An enchantress?” repeated Stanmer, looking at me askance.

He is a very simple youth, but who am I to blame him?

“A charmer,” I said “a fascinatress!”

He turned away, staring at the altar candles.

“An artist—an actress,” I went on, rather brutally.

He gave me another glance.

“I think you are telling me all,” he said.

“No, no, there is more.” And we sat a long time in silence.

At last he proposed that we should go out; and we passed in the street, where the shadows had begun to stretch themselves.

“I don’t know what you mean by her being an actress,” he said, as we turned homeward.

“I suppose not. Neither should I have known, if any one had said that to me.”

“You are thinking about the mother,” said Stanmer. “Why are you always bringing her in?”

“My dear boy, the analogy is so great it forces itself upon me.”

He stopped and stood looking at me with his modest, perplexed young face. I thought he was going to exclaim—"The analogy be hanged!"—but he said after a moment—

"Well, what does it prove?"

"I can't say it proves anything; but it suggests a great many things."

"Be so good as to mention a few," he said, as we walked on.

"You are not sure of her yourself," I began.

"Never mind that—go on with your analogy."

"That's a part of it. You are very much in love with her."

"That's a part of it too, I suppose?"

"Yes, as I have told you before. You are in love with her, and yet you can't make her out; that's just where I was with regard to Madame de Salvi."

"And she too was an enchantress, an actress, an artist, and all the rest of it?"

"She was the most perfect coquette I ever knew, and the most dangerous, because the most finished."

"What you mean, then, is that her daughter is a finished coquette?"

"I rather think so."

Stanmer walked along for some moments in silence.

"Seeing that you suppose me to be a—a great admirer of the Countess," he said at last, "I am rather surprised at the freedom with which you speak of her."

I confessed that I was surprised at it myself. "But it's on account of the interest I take in you."

"I am immensely obliged to you!" said the poor boy.

“Ah, of course you don’t like it. That is, you like my interest—I don’t see how you can help liking that; but you don’t like my freedom. That’s natural enough; but, my dear young friend, I want only to help you. If a man had said to me—so many years ago—what I am saying to you, I should certainly also, at first, have thought him a great brute. But after a little, I should have been grateful—I should have felt that he was helping me.”

“You seem to have been very well able to help yourself,” said Stanmer. “You tell me you made your escape.”

“Yes, but it was at the cost of infinite perplexity—of what I may call keen suffering. I should like to save you all that.”

“I can only repeat—it is really very kind of you.”

“Don’t repeat it too often, or I shall begin to think you don’t mean it.”

“Well,” said Stanmer, “I think this, at any rate—that you take an extraordinary responsibility in trying to put a man out of conceit of a woman who, as he believes, may make him very happy.”

I grasped his arm, and we stopped, going on with our talk like a couple of Florentines.

“Do you wish to marry her?”

He looked away, without meeting my eyes. “It’s a great responsibility,” he repeated.

“Before Heaven,” I said, “I would have married the mother! You are exactly in my situation.”

“Don’t you think you rather overdo the analogy?” asked poor Stanmer.

“A little more, a little less—it doesn’t matter. I believe you are in my shoes. But of course if you prefer it, I will beg a thousand pardons and leave them to carry you where they will.”

He had been looking away, but now he slowly turned his face and met my eyes. “You have gone too far to retreat; what is it you know about her?”

“About this one—nothing. But about the other—”

“I care nothing about the other!”

“My dear fellow,” I said, “they are mother and daughter—they are as like as two of Andrea’s Madonnas.”

“If they resemble each other, then, you were simply mistaken in the mother.”

I took his arm and we walked on again; there seemed no adequate reply to such a charge. “Your state of mind brings back my own so completely,” I said presently. “You admire her—you adore her, and yet, secretly, you mistrust her. You are enchanted with her personal charm, her grace, her wit, her everything; and yet in your private heart you are afraid of her.”

“Afraid of her?”

“Your mistrust keeps rising to the surface; you can’t rid yourself of the suspicion that at the bottom of all things she is hard and cruel, and you would be immensely relieved if some one should persuade you that your suspicion is right.”

Stanmer made no direct reply to this; but before we reached the hotel he said— “What did you ever know about the mother?”

“It’s a terrible story,” I answered.

He looked at me askance. “What did she do?”

“Come to my rooms this evening and I will tell you.”

He declared he would, but he never came. Exactly the way I should have acted!

14th.—I went again, last evening, to Casa Salvi, where I found the same little circle, with the addition of a couple of ladies. Stanmer was there, trying hard to talk to one of them, but making, I am sure, a very poor business of it. The Countess—well, the Countess was admirable. She greeted me like a friend of ten years, toward whom familiarity should not have engendered a want of ceremony;

she made me sit near her, and she asked me a dozen questions about my health and my occupations.

“I live in the past,” I said. “I go into the galleries, into the old palaces and the churches. Today I spent an hour in Michael Angelo’s chapel at San Loreozo.”

“Ah yes, that’s the past,” said the Countess. “Those things are very old.”

“Twenty-seven years old,” I answered.

“Twenty-seven? Altro!”

“I mean my own past,” I said. “I went to a great many of those places with your mother.”

“Ah, the pictures are beautiful,” murmured the Countess, glancing at Stanmer.

“Have you lately looked at any of them?” I asked. “Have you gone to the galleries with him?”

She hesitated a moment, smiling. “It seems to me that your question is a little impertinent. But I think you are like that.”

“A little impertinent? Never. As I say, your mother did me the honour, more than once, to accompany me to the Uffizzi.”

“My mother must have been very kind to you.”

“So it seemed to me at the time.”

“At the time only?”

“Well, if you prefer, so it seems to me now.”

“Eh,” said the Countess, “she made sacrifices.”

“To what, cara Signora? She was perfectly free. Your lamented father was dead—and she had not yet contracted her second marriage.”

“If she was intending to marry again, it was all the more reason she should have been careful.”

I looked at her a moment; she met my eyes gravely, over the top of her fan. “Are you very careful?” I said.

She dropped her fan with a certain violence. “Ah, yes, you are impertinent!”

“Ah no,” I said. “Remember that I am old enough to be your father; that I knew you when you were three years old. I may surely ask such questions. But you are right; one must do your mother justice. She was certainly thinking of her second marriage.”

“You have not forgiven her that!” said the Countess, very gravely.

“Have you?” I asked, more lightly.

“I don’t judge my mother. That is a mortal sin. My stepfather was very kind to me.”

“I remember him,” I said; “I saw him a great many times—your mother already received him.”

My hostess sat with lowered eyes, saying nothing; but she presently looked up.

“She was very unhappy with my father.”

“That I can easily believe. And your stepfather—is he still living?”

“He died—before my mother.”

“Did he fight any more duels?”

“He was killed in a duel,” said the Countess, discreetly.

It seems almost monstrous, especially as I can give no reason for it—but this announcement, instead of shocking me, caused me to feel a strange exhilaration. Most assuredly, after all these years, I bear the poor man no resentment. Of course I controlled my manner, and simply remarked to the Countess that as his fault had been so was his punishment. I think, however, that the feeling of which I speak

was at the bottom of my saying to her that I hoped that, unlike her mother's, her own brief married life had been happy.

"If it was not," she said, "I have forgotten it now."—I wonder if the late Count Scarabelli was also killed in a duel, and if his adversary . . . Is it on the books that his adversary, as well, shall perish by the pistol? Which of those gentlemen is he, I wonder? Is it reserved for poor little Stanmer to put a bullet into him? No; poor little Stanmer, I trust, will do as I did. And yet, unfortunately for him, that woman is consummately plausible. She was wonderfully nice last evening; she was really irresistible. Such frankness and freedom, and yet something so soft and womanly; such graceful gaiety, so much of the brightness, without any of the stiffness, of good breeding, and over it all something so picturesquely simple and southern. She is a perfect Italian. But she comes honestly by it. After the talk I have just jotted down she changed her place, and the conversation for half an hour was general. Stanmer indeed said very little; partly, I suppose, because he is shy of talking a foreign tongue. Was I like that—was I so constantly silent? I suspect I was when I was perplexed, and Heaven knows that very often my perplexity was extreme. Before I went away I had a few more words tête-à-tête with the Countess.

"I hope you are not leaving Florence yet," she said; "you will stay a while longer?"

I answered that I came only for a week, and that my week was over.

"I stay on from day to day, I am so much interested."

"Eh, it's the beautiful moment. I'm glad our city pleases you!"

"Florence pleases me—and I take a paternal interest to our young friend," I added, glancing at Stanmer. "I have become very fond of him."

"Bel tipo inglese," said my hostess. "And he is very intelligent; he has a beautiful mind."

She stood there resting her smile and her clear, expressive eyes upon me.

"I don't like to praise him too much," I rejoined, "lest I should appear to praise myself; he reminds me so much of what I was at his age. If your beautiful mother were to come to life for an hour she would see the resemblance."

She gave me a little amused stare.

“And yet you don’t look at all like him!”

“Ah, you didn’t know me when I was twenty-five. I was very handsome! And, moreover, it isn’t that, it’s the mental resemblance. I was ingenuous, candid, trusting, like him.”

“Trusting? I remember my mother once telling me that you were the most suspicious and jealous of men!”

“I fell into a suspicious mood, but I was, fundamentally, not in the least addicted to thinking evil. I couldn’t easily imagine any harm of any one.”

“And so you mean that Mr. Stanmer is in a suspicious mood?”

“Well, I mean that his situation is the same as mine.”

The Countess gave me one of her serious looks. “Come,” she said, “what was it—this famous situation of yours? I have heard you mention it before.”

“Your mother might have told you, since she occasionally did me the honour to speak of me.”

“All my mother ever told me was that you were—a sad puzzle to her.”

At this, of course, I laughed out—I laugh still as I write it.

“Well, then, that was my situation—I was a sad puzzle to a very clever woman.”

“And you mean, therefore, that I am a puzzle to poor Mr. Stanmer?”

“He is racking his brains to make you out. Remember it was you who said he was intelligent.”

She looked round at him, and as fortune would have it, his appearance at that moment quite confirmed my assertion. He was lounging back in his chair with an air of indolence rather too marked for a drawing-room, and staring at the ceiling with the expression of a man who has just been asked a conundrum. Madame Scarabelli seemed struck with his attitude.

“Don’t you see,” I said, “he can’t read the riddle?”

“You yourself,” she answered, “said he was incapable of thinking evil. I should be sorry to have him think any evil of me.”

And she looked straight at me—seriously, appealingly—with her beautiful candid brow.

I inclined myself, smiling, in a manner which might have meant—“How could that be possible?”

“I have a great esteem for him,” she went on; “I want him to think well of me. If I am a puzzle to him, do me a little service. Explain me to him.”

“Explain you, dear lady?”

“You are older and wiser than he. Make him understand me.”

She looked deep into my eyes for a moment, and then she turned away.

26th.—I have written nothing for a good many days, but meanwhile I have been half a dozen times to Casa Salvi. I have seen a good deal also of my young friend—had a good many walks and talks with him. I have proposed to him to come with me to Venice for a fortnight, but he won’t listen to the idea of leaving Florence. He is very happy in spite of his doubts, and I confess that in the perception of his happiness I have lived over again my own. This is so much the case that when, the other day, he at last made up his mind to ask me to tell him the wrong that Madame de Salvi had done me, I rather checked his curiosity. I told him that if he was bent upon knowing I would satisfy him, but that it seemed a pity, just now, to indulge in painful imagery.

“But I thought you wanted so much to put me out of conceit of our friend.”

“I admit I am inconsistent, but there are various reasons for it. In the first place—it’s obvious—I am open to the charge of playing a double game. I profess an admiration for the Countess Scarabelli, for I accept her hospitality, and at the same time I attempt to poison your mind; isn’t that the proper expression? I can’t exactly make up my mind to that, though my admiration for the Countess and my desire to prevent you from taking a foolish step are equally sincere. And then, in

the second place, you seem to me, on the whole, so happy! One hesitates to destroy an illusion, no matter how pernicious, that is so delightful while it lasts. These are the rare moments of life. To be young and ardent, in the midst of an Italian spring, and to believe in the moral perfection of a beautiful woman—what an admirable situation! Float with the current; I'll stand on the brink and watch you.”

“Your real reason is that you feel you have no case against the poor lady,” said Stanmer. “You admire her as much as I do.”

“I just admitted that I admired her. I never said she was a vulgar flirt; her mother was an absolutely scientific one. Heaven knows I admired that! It's a nice point, however, how much one is bound in honour not to warn a young friend against a dangerous woman because one also has relations of civility with the lady.”

“In such a case,” said Stanmer, “I would break off my relations.”

I looked at him, and I think I laughed.

“Are you jealous of me, by chance?”

He shook his head emphatically.

“Not in the least; I like to see you there, because your conduct contradicts your words.”

“I have always said that the Countess is fascinating.”

“Otherwise,” said Stanmer, “in the case you speak of I would give the lady notice.”

“Give her notice?”

“Mention to her that you regard her with suspicion, and that you propose to do your best to rescue a simple-minded youth from her wiles. That would be more loyal.” And he began to laugh again.

It is not the first time he has laughed at me; but I have never minded it, because I have always understood it.

“Is that what you recommend me to say to the Countess?” I asked.

“Recommend you!” he exclaimed, laughing again; “I recommend nothing. I may be the victim to be rescued, but I am at least not a partner to the conspiracy. Besides,” he added in a moment, “the Countess knows your state of mind.”

“Has she told you so?”

Stanmer hesitated.

“She has begged me to listen to everything you may say against her. She declares that she has a good conscience.”

“Ah,” said I, “she’s an accomplished woman!”

And it is indeed very clever of her to take that tone. Stanmer afterwards assured me explicitly that he has never given her a hint of the liberties I have taken in conversation with—what shall I call it?—with her moral nature; she has guessed them for herself. She must hate me intensely, and yet her manner has always been so charming to me! She is truly an accomplished woman!

May 4th.—I have stayed away from Casa Salvi for a week, but I have lingered on in Florence, under a mixture of impulses. I have had it on my conscience not to go near the Countess again—and yet from the moment she is aware of the way I feel about her, it is open war. There need be no scruples on either side. She is as free to use every possible art to entangle poor Stanmer more closely as I am to clip her fine-spun meshes. Under the circumstances, however, we naturally shouldn’t meet very cordially. But as regards her meshes, why, after all, should I clip them? It would really be very interesting to see Stanmer swallowed up. I should like to see how he would agree with her after she had devoured him—(to what vulgar imagery, by the way, does curiosity reduce a man!) Let him finish the story in his own way, as I finished it in mine. It is the same story; but why, a quarter of a century later, should it have the same dénouement? Let him make his own dénouement.

5th.—Hang it, however, I don’t want the poor boy to be miserable.

6th.—Ah, but did my dénouement then prove such a happy one?

7th.—He came to my room late last night; he was much excited.

“What was it she did to you?” he asked.

I answered him first with another question. “Have you quarrelled with the Countess?”

But he only repeated his own. “What was it she did to you?”

“Sit down and I’ll tell you.” And he sat there beside the candle, staring at me. “There was a man always there—Count Camerino.”

“The man she married?”

“The man she married. I was very much in love with her, and yet I didn’t trust her. I was sure that she lied; I believed that she could be cruel. Nevertheless, at moments, she had a charm which made it pure pedantry to be conscious of her faults; and while these moments lasted I would have done anything for her. Unfortunately they didn’t last long. But you know what I mean; am I not describing the Scarabelli?”

“The Countess Scarabelli never lied!” cried Stanmer.

“That’s just what I would have said to any one who should have made the insinuation! But I suppose you are not asking me the question you put to me just now from dispassionate curiosity.”

“A man may want to know!” said the innocent fellow.

I couldn’t help laughing out. “This, at any rate, is my story. Camerino was always there; he was a sort of fixture in the house. If I had moments of dislike for the divine Bianca, I had no moments of liking for him. And yet he was a very agreeable fellow, very civil, very intelligent, not in the least disposed to make a quarrel with me. The trouble, of course, was simply that I was jealous of him. I don’t know, however, on what ground I could have quarrelled with him, for I had no definite rights. I can’t say what I expected—I can’t say what, as the matter stood, I was prepared to do. With my name and my prospects, I might perfectly have offered her my hand. I am not sure that she would have accepted it—I am by no means clear that she wanted that. But she wanted, wanted keenly, to attach me to her; she wanted to have me about. I should have been capable of giving up everything—England, my career, my family—simply to devote myself to her, to live near her and see her every day.”

“Why didn’t you do it, then?” asked Stanmer.

“Why don’t you?”

“To be a proper rejoinder to my question,” he said, rather neatly, “yours should be asked twenty-five years hence.”

“It remains perfectly true that at a given moment I was capable of doing as I say. That was what she wanted—a rich, susceptible, credulous, convenient young Englishman established near her en permanence. And yet,” I added, “I must do her complete justice. I honestly believe she was fond of me.” At this Stanmer got up and walked to the window; he stood looking out a moment, and then he turned round. “You know she was older than I,” I went on. “Madame Scarabelli is older than you. One day in the garden, her mother asked me in an angry tone why I disliked Camerino; for I had been at no pains to conceal my feeling about him, and something had just happened to bring it out. ‘I dislike him,’ I said, ‘because you like him so much.’ ‘I assure you I don’t like him,’ she answered. ‘He has all the appearance of being your lover,’ I retorted. It was a brutal speech, certainly, but any other man in my place would have made it. She took it very strangely; she turned pale, but she was not indignant. ‘How can he be my lover after what he has done?’ she asked. ‘What has he done?’ She hesitated a good while, then she said: ‘He killed my husband.’ ‘Good heavens!’ I cried, ‘and you receive him!’ Do you know what she said? She said, ‘Che vuole?’”

“Is that all?” asked Stanmer.

“No; she went on to say that Camerino had killed Count Salvi in a duel, and she admitted that her husband’s jealousy had been the occasion of it. The Count, it appeared, was a monster of jealousy—he had led her a dreadful life. He himself, meanwhile, had been anything but irreproachable; he had done a mortal injury to a man of whom he pretended to be a friend, and this affair had become notorious. The gentleman in question had demanded satisfaction for his outraged honour; but for some reason or other (the Countess, to do her justice, did not tell me that her husband was a coward), he had not as yet obtained it. The duel with Camerino had come on first; in an access of jealous fury the Count had struck Camerino in the face; and this outrage, I know not how justly, was deemed expiable before the other. By an extraordinary arrangement (the Italians have certainly no sense of fair play) the other man was allowed to be Camerino’s second. The duel was fought with swords, and the Count received a wound of which, though at first it was not

expected to be fatal, he died on the following day. The matter was hushed up as much as possible for the sake of the Countess's good name, and so successfully that it was presently observed that, among the public, the other gentleman had the credit of having put his blade through M. de Salvi. This gentleman took a fancy not to contradict the impression, and it was allowed to subsist. So long as he consented, it was of course in Camerino's interest not to contradict it, as it left him much more free to keep up his intimacy with the Countess."

Stanmer had listened to all this with extreme attention. "Why didn't she contradict it?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I am bound to believe it was for the same reason. I was horrified, at any rate, by the whole story. I was extremely shocked at the Countess's want of dignity in continuing to see the man by whose hand her husband had fallen."

"The husband had been a great brute, and it was not known," said Stanmer.

"Its not being known made no difference. And as for Salvi having been a brute, that is but a way of saying that his wife, and the man whom his wife subsequently married, didn't like him."

Stanmer looked extremely meditative; his eyes were fixed on mine. "Yes, that marriage is hard to get over. It was not becoming."

"Ah," said I, "what a long breath I drew when I heard of it! I remember the place and the hour. It was at a hill-station in India, seven years after I had left Florence. The post brought me some English papers, and in one of them was a letter from Italy, with a lot of so-called 'fashionable intelligence.' There, among various scandals in high life, and other delectable items, I read that the Countess Bianca Salvi, famous for some years as the presiding genius of the most agreeable seen in Florence, was about to bestow her hand upon Count Camerino, a distinguished Bolognese. Ah, my dear boy, it was a tremendous escape! I had been ready to marry the woman who was capable of that! But my instinct had warned me, and I had trusted my instinct."

"'Instinct's everything,' as Falstaff says!" And Stanmer began to laugh. "Did you tell Madame de Salvi that your instinct was against her?"

"No; I told her that she frightened me, shocked me, horrified me."

“That’s about the same thing. And what did she say?”

“She asked me what I would have? I called her friendship with Camerino a scandal, and she answered that her husband had been a brute. Besides, no one knew it; therefore it was no scandal. Just your argument! I retorted that this was odious reasoning, and that she had no moral sense. We had a passionate argument, and I declared I would never see her again. In the heat of my displeasure I left Florence, and I kept my vow. I never saw her again.”

“You couldn’t have been much in love with her,” said Stanmer.

“I was not—three months after.”

“If you had been you would have come back—three days after.”

“So doubtless it seems to you. All I can say is that it was the great effort of my life. Being a military man, I have had on various occasions to face time enemy. But it was not then I needed my resolution; it was when I left Florence in a post-chaise.”

Stanmer turned about the room two or three times, and then he said: “I don’t understand! I don’t understand why she should have told you that Camerino had killed her husband. It could only damage her.”

“She was afraid it would damage her more that I should think he was her lover. She wished to say the thing that would most effectually persuade me that he was not her lover—that he could never be. And then she wished to get the credit of being very frank.”

“Good heavens, how you must have analysed her!” cried my companion, staring.

“There is nothing so analytic as disillusionment. But there it is. She married Camerino.”

“Yes, I don’t lime that,” said Stanmer. He was silent a while, and then he added—
“Perhaps she wouldn’t have done so if you had remained.”

He has a little innocent way! “Very likely she would have dispensed with the ceremony,” I answered, drily.

“Upon my word,” he said, “you have analysed her!”

“You ought to be grateful to me. I have done for you what you seem unable to do for yourself.”

“I don’t see any Camerino in my case,” he said.

“Perhaps among those gentlemen I can find one for you.”

“Thank you,” he cried; “I’ll take care of that myself!” And he went away—satisfied, I hope.

10th.—He’s an obstinate little wretch; it irritates me to see him sticking to it. Perhaps he is looking for his Camerino. I shall leave him, at any rate, to his fate; it is growing insupportably hot.

11th.—I went this evening to bid farewell to the Scarabelli. There was no one there; she was alone in her great dusky drawing-room, which was lighted only by a couple of candles, with the immense windows open over the garden. She was dressed in white; she was deucedly pretty. She asked me, of course, why I had been so long without coming.

“I think you say that only for form,” I answered. “I imagine you know.”

“Chè! what have I done?”

“Nothing at all. You are too wise for that.”

She looked at me a while. “I think you are a little crazy.”

“Ah no, I am only too sane. I have too much reason rather than too little.”

“You have, at any rate, what we call a fixed idea.”

“There is no harm in that so long as it’s a good one.”

“But yours is abominable!” she exclaimed, with a laugh.

“Of course you can’t like me or my ideas. All things considered, you have treated me with wonderful kindness, and I thank you and kiss your hands. I leave Florence tomorrow.”

“I won’t say I’m sorry!” she said, laughing again. “But I am very glad to have seen you. I always wondered about you. You are a curiosity.”

“Yes, you must find me so. A man who can resist your charms! The fact is, I can’t. This evening you are enchanting; and it is the first time I have been alone with you.”

She gave no heed to this; she turned away. But in a moment she came back, and stood looking at me, and her beautiful solemn eyes seemed to shine in the dimness of the room.

“How could you treat my mother so?” she asked.

“Treat her so?”

“How could you desert the most charming woman in the world?”

“It was not a case of desertion; and if it had been it seems to me she was consoled.”

At this moment there was the sound of a step in the ante-chamber, and I saw that the Countess perceived it to be Stanmer’s.

“That wouldn’t have happened,” she murmured. “My poor mother needed a protector.”

Stanmer came in, interrupting our talk, and looking at me, I thought, with a little air of bravado. He must think me indeed a tiresome, meddlesome bore; and upon my word, turning it all over, I wonder at his docility. After all, he’s five-and-twenty—and yet I must add, it does irritate me—the way he sticks! He was followed in a moment by two or three of the regular Italians, and I made my visit short.

“Good-bye, Countess,” I said; and she gave me her hand in silence. “Do you need a protector?” I added, softly.

She looked at me from head to foot, and then, almost angrily—“Yes, Signore.”

But, to deprecate her anger, I kept her hand an instant, and then bent my venerable head and kissed it. I think I appeased her.

BOLOGNA, 14th.—I left Florence on the 11th, and have been here these three days. Delightful old Italian town—but it lacks the charm of my Florentine secret.

I wrote that last entry five days ago, late at night, after coming back from Casa Salsi. I afterwards fell asleep in my chair; the night was half over when I woke up. Instead of going to bed, I stood a long time at the window, looking out at the river. It was a warm, still night, and the first faint streaks of sunrise were in the sky. Presently I heard a slow footstep beneath my window, and looking down, made out by the aid of a street lamp that Stanmer was but just coming home. I called to him to come to my rooms, and, after an interval, he made his appearance.

“I want to bid you good-bye,” I said; “I shall depart in the morning. Don’t go to the trouble of saying you are sorry. Of course you are not; I must have bullied you immensely.”

He made no attempt to say he was sorry, but he said he was very glad to have made my acquaintance.

“Your conversation,” he said, with his little innocent air, “has been very suggestive.”

“Have you found Camerino?” I asked, smiling.

“I have given up the search.”

“Well,” I said, “some day when you find that you have made a great mistake, remember I told you so.”

He looked for a minute as if he were trying to anticipate that day by the exercise of his reason.

“Has it ever occurred to you that you may have made a great mistake?”

“Oh yes; everything occurs to one sooner or later.”

That's what I said to him; but I didn't say that the question, pointed by his candid young countenance, had, for the moment, a greater force than it had ever had before.

And then he asked me whether, as things had turned out, I myself had been so especially happy.

PARIS, December 17th.—A note from young Stanmer, whom I saw in Florence—a remarkable little note, dated Rome, and worth transcribing.

“My dear General—I have it at heart to tell you that I was married a week ago to the Countess Salvi-Scarabelli. You talked me into a great muddle; but a month after that it was all very clear. Things that involve a risk are like the Christian faith; they must be seen from the inside.—Yours ever, E. S.

“P. S.—A fig for analogies unless you can find an analogy for my happiness!”

His happiness makes him very clever. I hope it will last—I mean his cleverness, not his happiness.

LONDON, April 19th, 1877.—Last night, at Lady H---'s, I met Edmund Stanmer, who married Bianca Salvi's daughter. I heard the other day that they had come to England. A handsome young fellow, with a fresh contented face. He reminded me of Florence, which I didn't pretend to forget; but it was rather awkward, for I remember I used to disparage that woman to him. I had a complete theory about her. But he didn't seem at all stiff; on the contrary, he appeared to enjoy our encounter. I asked him if his wife were there. I had to do that.

“Oh yes, she's in one of the other rooms. Come and make her acquaintance; I want you to know her.”

“You forget that I do know her.”

“Oh no, you don't; you never did.” And he gave a little significant laugh.

I didn't feel like facing the *ci-devant* Scarabelli at that moment; so I said that I was leaving the house, but that I would do myself the honour of calling upon his wife. We talked for a minute of something else, and then, suddenly breaking off and looking at me, he laid his hand on my arm. I must do him the justice to say that he looks felicitous.

“Depend upon it you were wrong!” he said.

“My dear young friend,” I answered, “imagine the alacrity with which I concede it.”

Something else again was spoken of, but in an instant he repeated his movement.

“Depend upon it you were wrong.”

“I am sure the Countess has forgiven me,” I said, “and in that case you ought to bear no grudge. As I have had the honour to say, I will call upon her immediately.”

“I was not alluding to my wife,” he answered. “I was thinking of your own story.”

“My own story?”

“So many years ago. Was it not rather a mistake?”

I looked at him a moment; he’s positively rosy.

“That’s not a question to solve in a London crush.”

And I turned away.

22d.—I haven’t yet called on the ci-devant; I am afraid of finding her at home. And that boy’s words have been thrumming in my ears—“Depend upon it you were wrong. Wasn’t it rather a mistake?” Was I wrong—was it a mistake? Was I too cautious—too suspicious—too logical? Was it really a protector she needed—a man who might have helped her? Would it have been for his benefit to believe in her, and was her fault only that I had forsaken her? Was the poor woman very unhappy? God forgive me, how the questions come crowding in! If I marred her happiness, I certainly didn’t make my own. And I might have made it—eh? That’s a charming discovery for a man of my age!



GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

(1313-1375)

BY W. J. STILLMAN

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It has been justly observed, and confirmed by all that we know of the early history of literature, that the first forms of it were in verse. This is in accordance with a principle which is stated by Herbert Spencer on a different but related theme, that "Ornament was before dress," the artistic instincts underlying and preceding the utilitarian preoccupations. History indeed was first poetry, as we had Homer before Thucydides, and as in all countries the traditions of the past take the form of metrical, and generally musical, recitation. An excellent and polished school of prose writers is the product of a tendency in national life of later origin than that which calls out the bards and ballad-singers, and is proof of a more advanced culture. The Renaissance in Italy was but the resumption of a life long suspended, and the succession of the phenomena in which was therefore far more rapid than was possible in a nation which had to trace the path without any survivals of a prior awakening; and while centuries necessarily intervened between Homer and the "Father of History," a generation sufficed between Dante and Boccaccio, for Italian literature had only to throw off the leaden garb of Latin form to find its new dress in the vernacular. Dante certainly wrote Italian prose, but he was more at ease in verse; and while the latter provoked in him an abundance of those happy phrases which seem to have been born with the thought they express, and which pass into the familiar stock of imagery of all later time, the prose of the 'Convito' and the 'Vita Nuova' hardly ever recalls itself in common speech by any parallel of felicity.

And Boccaccio too wrote poetry of no ignoble type, but probably because

he was part of an age when verse had become the habitual form of culture, and all who could write caught the habit of versification,--a habit easier to fall into in Italian than in any other language. But while the consecration of time has been given to the 'Commedia,' and the 'Convito' passes into the shadow and perspective of lesser things, so the many verses of Boccaccio are overlooked, and his greatest prose work, the 'Decameron,' is that with which his fame is mostly bound up.

Born in 1313, at seven years of age he showed signs of a literary facility, and his father, a merchant of Florence, put him to school with a reputable grammarian; but afterward, deciding to devote him to merchandise, sent him to study arithmetic,--restive and profitless in which, he was sent to study canon law, and finding his level no better there, went back to traffic and to Naples in his father's business when he was about twenty. The story runs that the sight of the tomb of Virgil turned his thoughts to poetry; but this confusion of the *_post hoc_* with the *_propter hoc_* is too common in remote and romantic legend to value much. The presence of Petrarch in the court of Robert, King of Naples, is far more likely to have been the kindling of his genius to its subsequent activity: and the passion he acquired while there for the illegitimate daughter of the King, Maria,--the Fiammetta of his later life,--furnished the fuel for its burning; his first work, the 'Filocolo,' being written as an offering to her. It is a prose love story, mixed with mythological allusions,--after the fashion of the day, which thought more of the classics than of nature; and like all his earlier works, prolix and pedantic.

The 'Theseide,' a purely classic theme, the war of Theseus with the Amazons, is in verse; and was followed by the 'Ameto,' or 'Florentine Nymphs,' a story of the loves of Ameto, a rustic swain, with one of the nymphs of the valley of the Affrico, a stream which flows into the Arno not far from where the poet was born, or where at least he passed his youth; and to which valley he seems always greatly attached, putting there the scene of most of his work, including the 'Decameron.' 'Ameto' is a mythological fiction, in which the characters mingle recitations of verse with the prose narration, and in which the gods of Greece and Rome masque in the familiar scenes. Following these came the 'Amorosa Visione,' and 'Filostrato,' in verse; 'Fiammetta' in prose, being the imaginary complaint of his beloved at their separation; 'Nimfale Fiesolano,' in verse, the scene also laid on the Affrico; and then the

'Decameron,' begun in 1348 and finished in 1353, after which he seems to have gradually acquired a disgust for the world he had lived in as he had known it, and turned to more serious studies. He wrote a life of Dante, 'Il Corbaccio,' a piece of satirical savagery, the 'Genealogy of the Gods,' and various minor works; and spent much of his time in intercourse with Petrarch, whose conversation and influence were of a different character from that of his earlier life.

[Illustration: G. BOCCACCIO.]

Boccaccio died at Certaldo in the Val d'Elsa, December 2d, 1375. Of the numerous works he left, that by which his fame as a writer is established is beyond any question the 'Decameron,' or Ten Days' Entertainment; in which a merry company of gentlemen and ladies, appalled by the plague raging in their Florence, take refuge in the villas near the city, and pass their time in story-telling and rambles in the beautiful country around, only returning when the plague has to a great extent abated. The superiority of the 'Decameron' is not only in the polish and grace of its style, the first complete departure from the stilted classicism of contemporary narrative, the happy naturalness of good story-telling,--but in the conception of the work as a whole, and the marvelous imagination of the filling-in between the framework of the story of the plague by the hundred tales from all lands and times, with the fine thread of the narrative of the day-by-day doings of the merry and gracious company, their wanderings, the exquisite painting of the Tuscan landscape (in which one recognizes the Val d'Arno even to-day), and the delicate drawing of their various characters. It is only when all these elements have been taken into consideration, and the unity wrought through such a maze of interest and mass of material without ever becoming dull or being driven to repetition, that we understand the power of Boccaccio as an artist.

We must take the ten days' holiday as it is painted: a gay and entrancing record of a fortunate and brilliant summer vacation, every one of its hundred pictures united with the rest by a delicate tracery of flowers and landscape, with bird-songs and laughter, bits of tender and chaste by-play--for there were recognized lovers in the company; and when this is conceived in its entirety, we must set it in the massive frame of terrible gloom of the great plague, through which Boccaccio makes us look at his picture. And then the frame itself becomes a

picture; and its ghastly horror--the apparent fidelity of the descriptions, which makes one feel as if he had before him the evidence of an eye-witness--gives a measure of the power of the artist and the range of his imagination, from an earthly inferno to an earthly paradise, such as even the 'Commedia' does not give us. In this stupendous ensemble, the individual tales become mere details, filling in of the space or time; and, taken out of it, the whole falls into a mere story-book, in which the only charm is the polish of the parts, the shine of the fragments that made the mosaic. The tales came from all quarters, and only needed to be amusing or interesting enough to make one suppose that they had been listened to with pleasure: stories from the 'Gesta Romanorum,' the mediæval chronicles, or any gossip of the past or present, just to make a whole; the criticism one might pass on them, I imagine, never gave Boccaccio a thought, only the way they were placed being important. The elaborate preparation for the story-telling; the grouping of them as a whole, in contrast with the greater story he put as their contrast and foil; the solemn gloom, the deep chiaroscuro of this framing, painted like a miniature; the artful way in which he prepares for his *_lieta brigata_* the way out of the charnel-house: these are the real 'Decameron.' The author presents it in a prelude which has for its scope only to give the air of reality to the whole, as if not only the plague, but the 'Decameron,' had been history; and the proof of his perfect success is in the fact that for centuries the world has been trying to identify the villas where the merry men and maidens met, as if they really had met.

"Whenever, most gracious ladies, I reflect how pitiful you all are by nature, I recognize that this work will in your opinion have a sad and repulsive beginning, as the painful memory of the pestilence gone by, fraught with loss to all who saw or knew of it, and which memory the work will bear on its front. But I would not that for this you read no further, through fear that your reading should be always through sighs and tears. This frightful beginning I prepare for you as for travelers a rough and steep mountain, beyond which lies a most beautiful and delightful plain, by so much the more pleasurable as the difficulty of the ascent and passage of the mountain had been great. And as the extreme of pleasure touches pain, so suffering is effaced by a joy succeeding. To this brief vexation (I call it brief, as contained in few

words) follow closely the sweets and pleasures I have promised, and which would not be hoped for from such a beginning if it were not foretold. And to tell the truth, if I had been able frankly to bring you where I wished by other way than this rough one, I had willingly done so; but because I could not, without these recollections, show what was the occasion of the incidents of which you will read, I was obliged to write of them."

The elaborate description of the plague which follows, shows not only Boccaccio's inventive power,--as being, like that of Defoe of the plague of London (which is a curious parallel to this) altogether imaginary, since the writer was at Naples during the whole period of the pestilence,--but also that it was a part indispensable of the entire scheme, and described with all its ghastly minuteness simply to enhance the value of his sunshine and merriment. He was in Naples from 1345 until 1350, without any other indication of a visit to Florence than a chronological table of his life, in which occurs this item:--"1348, departs in the direction of Tuscany with Louis of Taranto:" as if either a prince on his travels would take the plague in the course of them, or a man so closely interested in the events of the time at Naples, and in the height of his passion for Fiammetta,--the separation from whom he had hardly endured when earlier (1345) he was separated from her by his duty to his aged father,--would have chosen the year of the pestilence, when every one who could, fled Florence, to return there; and we find him in May, 1349, in Naples, in the full sunshine of Fiammetta's favor, and remaining there until his father's death in 1350.

There is indeed in Boccaccio's description of the plague that which convicts it of pure invention, quickened by details gathered from eye-witnesses,--the very minuteness of the description in certain points not in accord with the character of the disease, as when he narrates that the hogs rooting in the garments of the dead thrown out into the streets "presently, as if they had taken poison, after a few dizzy turns, fell dead"; and this, which he says he saw with his own eyes, is the only incident of which he makes this declaration (the incident on which the unity of his work hinges, the meeting of the merry troupe in the church of S. Maria Novella, being recorded on the information of a person "worthy of belief"). Nor does he in his own person intrude anywhere in the story; so that this bit of intense

realization thrown into the near foreground of his picture, as it were by chance, and without meaning, yet certified by his own signature, is the point at which he gets touch of his reader and convinces him of actuality throughout the romance.

And to my mind this opening chapter, with all its horrors and charnel-house realization, its slight and suggestive delineation of character, all grace and beauty springing out of the chaos and social dissolution, is not only the best part of the work, but the best of Boccaccio's. The well-spun golden cord on which the "Novelle" are strung is ornamented, as it were, at the divisions of the days by little cameos of crafty design; but the opening, the portico of this hundred-chambered palace of art, has its own proportions and design, and may be taken and studied alone. Nothing can, it seems to me, better convey the idea of the death-stricken city, "the surpassing city of Florence, beyond every other in Italy most beautiful,"--a touch to enhance the depth of his shade, than the way he brings out in broad traits the greatness of the doom: setting in the heavens that consuming sun; the paralysis of the panic; the avarice of men not daunted by death; the helplessness of all flesh before--

"the just wrath of God for our correction sent upon men; for healing of such maladies neither counsel of physician nor virtue of any medicine whatever seemed to avail or have any effect--even as if nature could not endure this suffering or the ignorance of the medical attendants (of whom, besides regular physicians, there was a very great number, both men and women, who had never had any medical education whatever), who could discover no cause for the malady and therefore no appropriate remedy, so that not only very few recovered, but almost every one attacked died by the third day--after the appearance of the above-noted signs, some sooner and some later, and mostly without any fever or violent symptoms. And this pestilence was of so much greater extent that by merely communicating with the sick the well were attacked, just as fire spreads to dry or oiled matter which approaches it.... Of the common people, and perhaps in great part of the middle classes, the situation was far more miserable, as they, either through hope of escaping the contagion or poverty, mostly kept to their houses and sickened by thousands a day,

and not being aided or attended in any respect, almost without exception died. And many there were who ended their lives in the public streets by day or night, and many who, dying in their houses, were only discovered by the stench of their dead bodies; and of these and others that died everywhere the city was full. These were mainly disposed of in the same way by their neighbors, moved more by the fear that the corruption of the dead bodies should harm them than by any charity for the deceased. They by themselves or with the aid of bearers, when they could find any, dragged out of their houses the bodies of those who had died, and laid them before the doors, where, especially in the morning, whoever went about the streets could have seen them without number,--even to that point had matters come that no more was thought of men dying than we think of goats; more than a hundred thousand human beings are believed to have been taken from life within the walls of Florence, which before the mortal pestilence were not believed to have contained so many souls. Oh! how many great palaces, how many beautiful houses, how many noble dwellings, once full of domestics, of gentlemen and ladies, became empty even to the last servant! How many historical families, how many immense estates, what prodigious riches remained without heirs! How many brave men, how many beautiful women, how many gay youths whom not only we, but Galen, Hippocrates, or Esculapius would have pronounced in excellent health, in the morning dined with their relatives, companions and friends, and the coming night supped with those who had passed away."

The ten companions, meeting in the church of S. Maria Novella, seven ladies and three gentlemen, agree to escape this doom, and, repairing to one of the deserted villas in the neighborhood, to pass the time of affliction in merry doings and sayings; and with four maids and three men-servants, move eastward out of the gloomy city. Their first habitation is clearly indicated as what is known to-day as the Poggio Gherardi, under Maiano. After the second day they return towards the city a short distance and establish themselves in what seems a more commodious abode, and which I consider incontrovertibly identified as the Villa Pasolini, or Rasponi, and which was in their day the property of the Memmi family, the famous pupils of Giotto. The site of this villa

overlooks the Valley of the Ladies, which figures in the framework of the "Novelle," and in which then there was a lake to which Boccaccio alludes, now filled up by the alluvium of the Affrico, the author's beloved river, and which runs through the valley and under the villa. The valley now forms part of the estate of Professor Willard Fiske. As the entire adventure is imaginary, and the "merry company" had no existence except in the dreams of Boccaccio, it is useless to seek any evidence of actual occupation; but the care he put in the description of the localities and surroundings, distances, etc., shows that he must have had in his mind, as the framework of the story, these two localities. The modern tradition ascribing to the Villa Palmieri the honor of the second habitation has no confirmation of any kind.

The house-flitting is thus told:--

"The dawn had already, under the near approach of the sun, from rosy become golden: when on Sunday, the Queen[3] arising and arousing all her company, and the chamberlain--having long before sent in advance to the locality where they were to go, enough of the articles required so that he might prepare what was necessary--seeing the Queen on the way, quickly loading all other things as if it were the moving of the camp, went off with the baggage, leaving the servants with the Ladies and the Gentlemen. The Queen, then, with slow steps, accompanied and followed by her Ladies and the three Gentlemen, with the escort of perhaps twenty nightingales and other birds, by a little path not too frequented, but full of green plants and flowers which by the rising sun began to open, took the road towards the west; and gossiping, laughing, and exchanging witticisms with her brigade, arrived before having gone two thousand steps at a most beautiful and rich palace, which, somewhat raised above the plain, was posted on a hill."

[Footnote 3: Each day a Queen or King was chosen to rule over the doings of the company and determine all questions.]

As the description of the surroundings of the villa into which the gay assembly now entered is one of the most vivid and one of the gayest pieces of description in the brilliant counterfoil which the author has

contrived, to set off the gloom of the city, it is worth giving entire; being as well a noble example of the prose of the 'Decameron':--

"Near to which [the balcony on which they had reposed after their walk] having ordered to open a garden which was annexed to the palace, being all inclosed in a wall, they entered in; and as it appeared to them on entering to be of a marvelous beauty altogether, they set themselves to examine it in detail. It had within, and in many directions through it, broad paths, straight as arrows and covered with arbors of vine which gave indications of having that year an excellent vintage, and they all giving out such odors to the garden, that, mingled with those of many other things which perfumed it, they seemed to be in the midst of all the perfumeries that the Orient ever knew; the sides of the paths being closed in by red and white roses and jasmine, so that not only in the morning, but even when the sun was high, they could wander at pleasure under fragrant and odoriferous shade, without entanglement. How many, of what kind, and how planted were the plants in that place, it were long to tell; but there is nothing desirable which suits our climate which was not there in abundance. In the midst of which (which is not less delightful than other things that were there, but even more so) was a meadow of the most minute herbs, and so green that it seemed almost black, colored by a thousand varieties of flowers, and closed around by green and living orange and lemon trees, which, having the ripe and the young fruit and the flowers together, gave not only grateful shade for the eyes, but added the pleasures of their odors. In the midst of that meadow was a fountain of the whitest marble with marvelous sculptures. From within this, I know not whether by a natural vein or artificial, through a figure which stood on a column in the midst of it, sprang so much water, and so high, falling also into the fountain with delightful sound, that it would at least have driven a mill. This, then (I mean the water which ran over from the fountain), through hidden channels went out of the meadow, and by little canals beautiful and artfully made becoming visible outside of it, ran all around it; and then by similar canals into every part of the garden, gathering together

finally in that part of it where from the beautiful garden it escaped, and thence descending limpid to the plain, and before reaching it, with great force and not a little advantage to the master, turned two mills. To see this garden, its beautiful orderliness, the plants and the fountain with the brooks running from it, was so pleasing to the ladies and the three youths that all commenced to declare that if Paradise could be found on earth, they could not conceive what other form than that of this garden could be given to it, nor what beauty could be added to it. Wandering happily about it, twining from the branches of various trees beautiful garlands, hearing everywhere the songs of maybe twenty kinds of birds as it were in contest with each other, they became aware of another charm of which, to the others being added, they had not taken note: they saw the garden full of a hundred varieties of beautiful animals, and pointing them out one to the other, on one side ran out rabbits, on another hares, here lying roe-deer and there feeding stags, and besides these many other kinds of harmless beasts, each one going for his pleasure as if domesticated, wandering at ease; all which, beyond the other pleasures, added a greater pleasure. And when, seeing this or that, they had gone about enough, the tables being set around the beautiful fountain, first singing six songs and dancing six dances, as it pleased the Queen, they went to eat, and being with great and well-ordered service attended, and with delicate and good dishes, becoming gayer they arose and renewed music and song and dance, until the Queen on account of the increasing heat judged that whoever liked should go to sleep. Of whom some went, but others, conquered by the beauty of the place, would not go, but remained, some to read romances, some to play at chess and at tables, while the others slept. But when passed the ninth hour, they arose, and refreshing their faces with the fresh water, they came to the fountain, and in their customary manner taking their seats, waited for the beginning of the story-telling on the subject proposed by the Queen."

Of the character of the Novelle I have need to say little: they were the shaping of the time, and made consonant with its tastes, and nobody was

then disturbed by their tone. Some are indelicate to modern taste, and some have passed into the classics of all time. The story of 'Griselda'; that of 'The Stone of Invisibility,' put into shape by Irving; 'Frederick of the Alberighi and his Falcon'; 'The Pot of Basil'; and 'The Jew Abraham, Converted to Christianity by the Immorality of the Clergy,' are stories which belong to all subsequent times, as they may have belonged to the ages before. Those who know what Italian society was then, and in some places still is, will be not too censorious, judging lightness of tongue and love of a good story as necessarily involving impurity. And Boccaccio has anticipated his critics in this vein, putting his apology in the mouth of Filomena, who replies to Neifile, when the latter speaks of scandal growing out of their holiday, "This amounts to nothing where I live virtuously and my conscience in no wise reproaches me--let them who will, speak against me: I take God and the truth for my defense."

FREDERICK OF THE ALBERIGHI AND HIS FALCON

You must know that Coppo di Borghese Domenichi--who was in our city, and perhaps still is, a man of reverence and of great authority amongst us, both for his opinions and for his virtues, and much more for the nobility of his family, being distinguished and wealthy and of enduring reputation, being full of years and experience--was often delighted to talk with his neighbors and others of the things of the past, which he, better than anybody else, could do with excellent order and with unclouded memory. Amongst the pleasant stories which he used to tell was this:--

In Florence there was a young man called Frederick, son of Master Philip Alberighi, who for military ability and for courteous manners was reputed above all other gentlemen of Tuscany. He, as often happens with gentlemen, became enamored of a gentle lady called Madonna Giovanni, in her time considered the most beautiful and most graceful woman in Florence. In order that he might win her love he tilted and exercised in arms, made feasts and donations, and spent all his substance without restraint. But Madonna Giovanni, no less honest than beautiful, cared for none of these things which he did for her, nor for him. Frederick then spent more than his means admitted, and gaining nothing, as easily happens, his money disappeared, and he remained poor and without any

other property than a poor little farm, by the income of which he was barely able to live; besides this, he had his falcon, one of the best in the world. On this account, and because unable to remain in the city as he desired, though more than ever devoted, he remained at Campi, where his little farm was; and there, as he might hunt, he endured his poverty patiently.

Now it happened one day when Frederick had come to extreme poverty, that the husband of Madonna Giovanni became ill, and seeing death at hand, made his will; and being very rich, in this will left as his heir his son, a well-grown boy; and next to him, as he had greatly loved Madonna Giovanni, he made her his heir if his son should die without legitimate heirs, and then died. Remaining then a widow, as the custom is amongst our women, Madonna Giovanni went that summer with her son into the country on an estate of hers near to that of Frederick, so that it happened that this boy, beginning to become friendly with Frederick and to cultivate a liking for books and birds, and having seen many times the falcon of Frederick fly, took an extreme pleasure in it and desired very greatly to have it, but did not dare to ask it, seeing that it was so dear to Frederick.

In this state of things it happened that the boy became ill, and on this account the mother sorrowing greatly, he being that which she loved most of everything which she had, tended him constantly and never ceased comforting him; and begged him that if there was anything that he wanted, to tell her, so that she certainly, if it were possible to get it, would obtain it for him. The young man, hearing many times this proposal, said: "Mother, if you can manage that I should have the falcon of Frederick, I believe that I should get well at once." The mother, hearing this, reflected with herself and began to study what she might do. She knew that Frederick had long loved her, and that he had never received from her even a look; on this account she said, How can I send to him or go to him, to ask for this falcon, which is, by what I hear, the thing that he most loves, and which besides keeps him in the world; and how can I be so ungrateful as to take from a gentleman what I desire, when it is the only thing that he has to give him pleasure? Embarrassed by such thoughts, and feeling that she was certain to have it if she asked it of him, and not knowing what to say, she did not reply to her son, but was silent. Finally, the love of her son overcoming her, she decided to satisfy him, whatever might happen, not

sending but going herself for the falcon; and she replied, "My son, be comforted and try to get well, for I promise you that the first thing that I do to-morrow will be to go and bring to you the falcon;" on which account the son in his joy showed the same day an improvement. The lady the next day took as companion another lady, and as if for pleasure went to the house of Frederick and asked for him. It being early, he had not been hawking, and was in his garden attending to certain little operations; and hearing that Madonna Giovanni asked for him at the door, wondering greatly, joyfully went. She, seeing him coming, with a ladylike pleasure went to meet him, and Frederick having saluted her with reverence, she said, "I hope you are well, Frederick," and then went on, "I have come to recompense you for the losses which you have already had on my account, loving me more than you need; and the reparation is, then, that I intend with this my companion to dine with you familiarly to-day." To this Frederick humbly replied, "Madonna, I do not remember ever to have suffered any loss on your account, but so much good that if I ever was worth anything, it is due to your worth, and to the love which I have borne you; and certainly your frank visit is dearer to me than would have been the being able to spend as much more as I have already spent, for you have come to a very poor house." So saying, he received them into his house in humility and conducted them into his garden; and then, not having any person to keep her company he said, "Madonna, since there is no one else, this good woman, the wife of my gardener, will keep you company while I go to arrange the table."

He, although his poverty was so great, had not yet realized how he had, without method or pleasure, spent his fortune; but this morning, finding nothing with which he could do honor to the lady for whose love he had already entertained so many men, made him think and suffer extremely; he cursed his fortune, and as a man beside himself ran hither and thither, finding neither money nor anything to pawn. It being late, and his desire to honor the gentle lady in some manner, and not wishing to call on anybody else, but rather to do all himself, his eyes fell upon his beloved falcon, which was in his cage above the table. He therefore took it, and finding it fat, and not having any other resource, he considered it to be a proper food for such a woman; and without thinking any further, he wrung its neck and ordered his servant that, it being plucked and prepared, it should be put on the spit and roasted immediately. And setting the table with the whitest of linen, of which he had still a little left, with a delighted countenance he returned to

the lady and told her that such dinner as he was able to prepare for her was ready. Thereupon, the lady with her companion, rising, went to dinner, and without knowing what she ate or what Frederick served, ate the good falcon.

Then leaving the table, and after pleasant conversation with him, it appeared to the lady that it was time to say what she had come for, and so she began amiably to say to Frederick:--"Frederick, recalling your past life and my honesty, which perhaps you considered cruelty and severity, I do not doubt in the least that you will be astonished at my presumption, hearing what I have come for; but if you had ever had children, through whom you might know how great is the love which one bears them, it seems to me certain that in part you would excuse me. But as you have not, I, who have one, cannot escape the law common to all mothers; obeying which, I am obliged, apart from my own pleasure and all other convention and duty, to ask of you a gift which I know is extremely dear, and reasonably so, because no other delight and no other amusement and no other consolation has your exhausted fortune left you; this gift is your falcon, which my boy has become so strongly enamored of, that if I do not take it to him I fear that his illness will become so much aggravated that I may lose him in consequence; therefore I pray you, not on account of the love which you bear me, but because of your nobility, which has shown greater courtesy than that of any other man, that you would be so kind, so good, as to give it to me, in order that by this gift the life of my son may be preserved, and I be forever under obligation to you."

Frederick, hearing what the lady demanded, and knowing that he could not serve her, because he had already given it to her to eat, commenced in her presence to weep so that he could not speak a word in reply; which weeping the lady first believed to be for sorrow at having to give up his good falcon more than anything else, and was about to tell him that she did not want it, but, hesitating, waited the reply of Frederick until the weeping ceased, when he spoke thus:--"Madonna, since it pleased God that I bestowed my love upon you, money, influence, and fortune have been contrary to me, and have given me great trouble; but all these things are trivial in respect to what fortune makes me at present suffer, from which I shall never have peace, thinking that you have come here to my poor house--to which while I was rich you never deigned to come--and asked of me a little gift, and that fortune has so

decreed that I shall not be able to give it to you; and why I cannot do so I will tell you in a few words. When I heard that you in your kindness wished to dine with me, having regard for your excellence and your worth, I considered it worthy and proper to give you the dearest food in my power, and therefore the falcon for which you now ask me was this morning prepared for you, and you have had it roasted on your plate and I had prepared it with delight; but now, seeing that you desire it in another manner, the sorrow that I cannot so please you is so great that never again shall I have peace;" and saying this, the feathers and the feet and the beak were brought before them in evidence; which thing the lady seeing and hearing, first blamed him for having entertained a woman with such a falcon, and then praised the greatness of his mind, which his poverty had not been able to diminish. Then, there being no hope of having the falcon on account of which the health of her son was in question, in melancholy she departed and returned to her son; who either for grief at not being able to have the falcon, or for the illness which might have brought him to this state, did not survive for many days, and to the great sorrow of his mother passed from this life.

She, full of tears and of sorrow, and remaining rich and still young, was urged many times by her brothers to remarry, which thing she had never wished; but being continually urged, and remembering the worth of Frederick and his last munificence, and that he had killed his beloved falcon to honor her, said to her brothers:--"I would willingly, if it please you, remain as I am; but if it please you more that I should take a husband, certainly I will never take any other if I do not take Frederick degli Alberighi." At this her brothers, making fun of her, said, "Silly creature, what do you say? Why do you choose him? He has nothing in the world." To this she replied, "My brothers, I know well that it is as you say; but I prefer rather a man who has need of riches, than riches that have need of a man." The brothers, hearing her mind, and knowing Frederick for a worthy man,--although poor,--as she wished, gave her with all her wealth to him; who, seeing this excellent woman whom he had so much loved become his wife, and besides that, being most rich, becoming economical, lived in happiness with her to the end of his days.



SAN PANTALEONE.

By Gabriele D'Annunzio

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I.

La gran piazza sabbiosa scintillava come sparsa di pomice in polvere. Tutte le case a torno imbiancate di calce avevano una singolare luminosità metallica, parevano come muraglie d'una immensa fornace presso ad estinguersi. In fondo, i pilastri di pietra della chiesa riverberavano l'irradiazione delle nuvole e si facevano rossi come di granito; le vetrate balenavano quasi contenessero lo scoppio d'un incendio interno; le figurazioni sacre prendevano un'aria viva di colori e di attitudini; tutta la mole ora, sotto lo splendore del nuovo fenomeno crepuscolare, assumeva una più alta potenza di dominio su le case dei Radusani.

Volgevano dalle strade alla piazza gruppi d'uomini e di femmine vociferando e gesticolando. In tutti li animi il terrore superstizioso ingigantiva rapidamente; da tutte quelle fantasie incolte mille immagini terribili di castigo divino si levavano; i commenti, le contestazioni ardenti, le scongiurazioni lamentevoli, i racconti sconnessi, le preghiere, le grida si mescevano in un romorio cupo d'uragano presso ad irrompere. Già da più giorni quei rossori sanguigni indugiavano nel cielo dopo il tramonto, invadevano le tranquillità della notte, illuminavano tragicamente i sonni delle campagne, suscitavano li urli dei cani.

“Giacobbe! Giacobbe!” gridavano, agitando le braccia, alcuni che fin allora avevano parlato a voce bassa, innanzi alla chiesa, stretti in torno a un pilastro del vestibolo. “Giacobbe!”

Usciva dalla porta madre e si accostava alli appellanti un uomo lungo e macilento che pareva infermo di febbre etica, calvo su la sommità del

cranio e coronato alle tempie e alla nuca di certi lunghi capelli rossicci. I suoi piccoli occhi cavi erano animati come dall'ardore di una passione profonda, un po' convergenti verso la radice del naso, d'un colore incerto. La mancanza dei due denti d'avanti nella mascella superiore dava all'atto della sua bocca nel profferire le parole e al moto del mento aguzzo sparso di peli una singolare apparenza di senilità faunesca. Tutto il resto del corpo era una miserabile architettura di ossa mal celata nei panni; e su le mani, su i polsi, su 'l reverso delle braccia, su 'l petto la cute era piena di segni turchini, di incisioni fatte a punta di spillo e a polvere d'indaco, in memoria de' santuari visitati, delle grazie ricevute, dei voti sciolti.

Come il fanatico giunse presso al gruppo del pilastro, una confusione di domande si levò da quelli uomini ansiosi. — Dunque? Che aveva detto Don Cònsolo? Facevano uscire soltanto il braccio d'argento? E tutto il busto non era meglio? Quando tornava Pallura con le candele? Erano cento libbre di cera? Soltanto cento libbre? E quando cominciavano le campane a sonare? Dunque? Dunque? —

I clamori aumentarono in torno a Giacobbe; i più lontani si strinsero verso la chiesa; da tutte le strade la gente si riversò su la piazza e la riempì. E Giacobbe rispondeva alli interroganti, parlava a voce bassa, come se rivelasse dei segreti terribili, come se apportasse delle profezie da lontano. Egli aveva veduto nell'alto, in mezzo al sangue, una mano minacciosa, e poi un velo nero, o poi una spada e una tromba....

“Racconta! racconta!” incitavano li altri, guardandosi in faccia, presi da una strana avidità di ascoltare cose meravigliose; mentre la favola di bocca in bocca si spandeva rapidamente per la moltitudine assembrata.

II.

La gran plaga vermiglia dall'orizzonte saliva lentamente verso lo zenit, tendeva ad occupare tutta la cupola del cielo. Un vapore di metallo in fusione pareva ondeggiare su i tetti delle case; e nel chiarore discendente dal crepuscolo raggi gialli e violetti si mescolavano con un tremolío d'iridescenza. Una lunga striscia più luminosa fuggiva verso una strada sboccante su l'argine del fiume; e s'intravedeva al fondo il fiammeggiamento delle acque tra i fusti lunghi e smilzi dei pioppetti; poi un lembo di campagna asiatica, dove le vecchie torri saracene si

levavano confusamente come isolotti di pietra fra le caligini. Le emanazioni affocanti del fieno mietuto si spandevano nell'aria; era a tratti come un odore di bachi putrefatti tra la frasca. Stuoli di rondini attraversavano lo spazio con molto schiamazzo di stridi, trafficando dai greti del fiume alle gronde. Nella moltitudine il mormorio era interrotto da silenzi di aspettazione. Il nome di Pallura circolava per le bocche; impazienze irose scoppiavano qua e là. Lungo la strada del fiume non si vedeva ancora apparire il traino; le candele mancavano; Don Cònsolo indugiava per questo ad esporre le reliquie, a fare li esorcismi; e il pericolo soprastava. Il pánico invadeva tutta quella gente ammassata come una mandra di bestie, non osante più di sollevare li occhi al cielo. Dai petti delle femmine cominciarono a rompere i singhiozzi; e una costernazione suprema oppresse e istupidì le coscienze al suono di quel pianto.

Allora le campane finalmente squillarono. Come i bronzi stavano a poca altezza, il fremito cupo del rintocco sfiorò tutte le teste; e una specie di ululato continuo si propagava nell'aria, tra un colpo e l'altro.

“San Pantaleone! San Pantaleone!”

Fu un immenso grido unanime di disperati che chiedevano aiuto. Tutti, in ginocchio, con le mani tese, con la faccia bianca, imploravano.

“San Pantaleone!”

Apparve sulla porta della chiesa, in mezzo al fumo di due turiboli, Don Cònsolo scintillante in una pianeta violetta a ricami d'oro. Egli teneva in alto il sacro braccio d'argento, e scongiurava l'aria gridando le parole latine:

“_Ut fidelibus tuis aeris serenitatem concedere digneris. Te rogamus, audi nos._”

L'apparizione della reliquia mise un delirio di tenerezza nella moltitudine. Scorrevano lagrime da tutti li occhi; e a traverso il velo lucido delle lagrime li occhi vedevano un miracoloso fulgore celeste emanare dalle tre dita in alto atteggiate a benedire. La figura del braccio pareva ora più grande nell'aria accesa; i raggi crepuscolari

suscitavano barbagli variissimi nelle pietre preziose; il balsamo dell'incenso si spargeva rapidamente per le nari devote.

“_Te rogamus, audi nos!_”

Ma, quando il braccio rientrò e le campane si arrestarono, nel momentaneo silenzio un tintinnio prossimo di sonagli si udì, che veniva dalla strada del fiume. E avvenne allora un repentino movimento di concorso verso quel lato; e molti dicevano:

“È Pallura con le candele! È Pallura che arriva! Ecco Pallura!”

Il traino si avanzava scricchiolando su la ghiaia, al passo di una pesante cavalla grigia a cui il gran corno d'ottone lucido brillava, simile a una bella mezzaluna, su la groppa. Come Giacobbe e li altri si fecero in contro, la pacifica bestia si fermò soffiando forte dalle narici. E Giacobbe, che s'accostò primo, subito vide disteso in fondo al traino il corpo di Pallura tutto sanguinante, e si mise a urlare agitando le braccia verso la folla: “È morto! È morto!”

III.

La trista novella si propagò in un baleno. La gente si accalcava in torno al traino, tendeva il collo per vedere qualche cosa, non pensava più alle minacce dell'alto, colpita dal nuovo caso inaspettato, invasa da quella natural curiosità feroce che li uomini hanno in conspetto del sangue.

“È morto? Come è morto?”

Pallura giaceva supino sulle tavole, con una larga ferita in mezzo alla fronte, con un orecchio lacerato, con delli strappi per le braccia, nei fianchi, in una coscia. Un rivo tiepido gli colava per il cavo delli occhi giù giù sino al mento ed al collo, gli chiazzava la camicia, gli formava dei grumi nerastri e lucenti su 'l petto, sulla cintola di cuoio, fin sulle brache. Giacobbe stava chino sopra quel corpo; tutti li altri a torno attendevano; una luce d'aurora illuminava i volti perplessi; e, in quel momento di silenzio, dalla riva del fiume si levava il cantico delle rane, e i pipistrelli passavano e ripassavano rasente le teste.

D'improvviso Giacobbe drizzandosi, con una gota macchiata di sangue, gridò:

“Non è morto. Respira ancora.”

Un mormorio sordo corse per la folla, e i più vicini si protesero per guardare; e l'inquietudine dei lontani cominciò a rompere in clamori. Due donne portarono un boccale d'acqua, un'altra portò de' brandelli di tela; un giovinetto offerse una zucca piena di vino. Fu lavata la faccia al ferito, fu fermato il flusso del sangue alla fronte, fu rialzato il capo. Sorsero quindi alte le voci, chiedendo le cause del fatto. — Le cento libbre di cera mancavano; appena pochi frantumi di candela rimanevano tra li interstizi delle tavole nel fondo del traino.

I giudizi, in mezzo al sommovimento, di più in più si accendevano e s'inasprivano e cozzavano. E come un antico odio ereditario ferveva contro il paese di Mascálico, posto di contro su l'altra riva del fiume, Giacobbe disse con la voce rauca, velenosamente:

“Che i ceri sieno serviti a San Gonselvo?”

Allora fu come una scintilla d'incendio. Lo spirito di chiesa si risvegliò d'un tratto in quella gente abbruttita per tanti anni nel culto cieco e feroce del suo unico idolo. Le parole del fanatico di bocca in bocca si propagarono. E sotto il rossore tragico del crepuscolo, la moltitudine tumultuante aveva apparenza d'una tribù di zingari ammutinati.

Il nome del santo rompeva da tutte le gole, come un grido di guerra. I più ardenti gittavano imprecazioni contro la parte del fiume, agitando le braccia, tendendo i pugni. Poi, tutti quei volti accesi dalla collera e dalla luce, larghi e possenti, a cui i cerchi d'oro delli orecchi e il gran ciuffo della fronte davano uno strano aspetto di barbarie, tutti quei volti si tesero verso il giacente, si addolcirono di misericordia. Ci fu in torno al traino una sollecitudine pietosa di femmine che volevano rianimare l'agonizzante: tante mani amorevoli gli cambiarono le strisce di tela su le ferite, gli spruzzarono d'acqua la faccia, gli accostarono alle labbra bianche la zucca del vino, gli composero una specie di guanciaie più molle sotto la testa.

“Pallura, povero Pallura, non rispondi?”

Egli stava supino, con gli occhi chiusi, con la bocca semiaperta, con una lanugine bruna sulle gote e su 'l mento, con una mite beltà di giovinezza ancora trasparente dai tratti tesi nella convulsione del dolore. Di sotto alla fasciatura della fronte gli colava un fil di sangue giù per la tempia; alli angoli della bocca apparivano piccole bolle di schiuma rossigna; e dalla gola gli usciva una specie di sibilo fioco, interrotto, come il suono del gargarismo d'un malato. In torno a lui le cure, le domande, li sguardi febbrili crescevano. La cavalla ogni tanto scoteva la testa e nitriva verso le case. Un'atmosfera come d'uragano imminente pesava su tutto il paese.

S'intesero allora grida femminili verso la piazza, grida di madre, che parvero più alte in mezzo al subitaneo ammutolimento di tutte le altre voci. E una donna enorme, tutta soffocata di adipe, attraversò la folla, giunse gridando presso il traino. Come ella era grave e non poteva salirvi, s'abbattè su i piedi del figlio, con parole d'amore tra i singhiozzi, con laceramenti così acuti di voce rotta e con una espressione di dolore così terribilmente comica che per tutti li astanti corse un brivido e tutti rivolsero altrove la faccia.

“Zaccheo! Zaccheo! cuore mio! gioia mia!...” gridava la vedova, senza finire, baciando i piedi del ferito, attraendolo a sè verso terra.

Il ferito si rimosse, torse la bocca per lo spasimo, aprì li occhi verso l'alto; ma certo non potè vedere, perchè una specie di pellicola umida gli copriva lo sguardo. Grosse lacrime cominciarono a sgorgargli dalli angoli delle palpebre e a scorrere giù per le guance e pe 'l collo; la bocca gli rimase torta; nel sibilo fioco della gola si sentì un vano sforzo di favella. E in torno incalzavano:

“Parla, Pallura! Chi t'ha ferito? Chi t'ha ferito? Parla! Parla!”

E sotto la domanda fremevano le ire, si addensavano i furori, un sordo tumulto di vendicazione si riscoteva, e l'odio ereditario ribolliva nell'animo di tutti.

“Parla! Chi t'ha ferito? Dillo a noi! Dillo a noi!”

Il moribondo aprì li occhi un'altra volta; e come gli tenevano serrate ambo le mani, forse per quel vivo contatto di calore li spiriti un istante gli si ridestarono, lo sguardo si illuminò, egli ebbe su le labbra un balbettamento vago, tra la schiuma che sopravveniva più copiosa e più sanguigna. Non si capivano ancora le parole. Si udì nel silenzio la respirazione della moltitudine anelante, e li occhi ebbero in fondo una fiamma, poichè tutti li animi attendevano una parola sola.

“.... Ma.... Ma.... Ma.... scálico....”

“Mascálico! Mascálico!” urlò Giacobbe che stava chino, con l'orecchio teso, ad afferrare le sillabe fievoli da quella bocca di morente.

Un fragore immenso accolse il grido. Nella moltitudine fu da prima un mareggiamento confuso di tempesta. Poi, quando una voce soverchiante il tumulto gittò l'allarme, la moltitudine a furia si sbandò. Un pensiero solo incalzava quelli uomini, un pensiero che pareva fosse balenato a tutte le menti in un attimo: armarsi di qualche cosa per colpire. Su tutte le coscienze instava una specie di fatalità sanguinaria, sotto il gran chiaror torvo del crepuscolo, in mezzo all'odore elettrico emanante dalla campagna ansiosa.

IV.

E la falange, armata di falci, di ronche, di scuri, di zappe, di schioppi, si riunì su la piazza, dinanzi alla chiesa. E tutti gridavano:

“San Pantaleone!”

Don Cònsolo, atterrito dallo schiamazzo, s'era rifugiato in fondo a uno stallo, dietro l'altare. Un manipolo di fanatici, condotto da Giacobbe, penetrò nella cappella maggiore, forzò le grate di bronzo, giunse nel sotterraneo, dove il busto del santo si custodiva. Tre lampade, alimentate d'olio d'oliva, ardevano dolcemente nell'aria umida del sacrario; dietro un cristallo, l'idolo cristiano scintillava con la testa bianca in mezzo a un gran disco solare; e le pareti sparivano sotto la ricchezza dei doni.

Quando l'idolo, portato su le spalle da quattro ercoli, si mostrò alfine tra i pilastri del vestibolo, e s'irraggiò alla luce aurorale, un lungo anelito di passione corse il popolo aspettante, un fremito come d'un

vento di gioia volò sopra tutte le fronti. E la colonna si mosse; e la testa enorme del santo oscillava in alto, guardando innanzi a sè dalle due orbite vuote.

Nel cielo ora, in mezzo all'accensione eguale e cupa, a tratti passavano de' solchi di meteore più vive; gruppi di nuvole sottili si distaccavano dall'orlo della zona, e galleggiavano lentamente dissolvendosi. Tutto il paese di Radusa appariva dietro come un monte di cenere che covasse il fuoco; e, dinanzi, le masse della campagna si perdevano con un luccichío indistinto. Un gran cantico di rane empiva la sonorità della solitudine.

Sulla strada del fiume il traino di Pallura fece ostacolo all'incedere. Era vuoto, ma conservava tracce di sangue in più parti. Imprecazioni irose scoppiarono d'improvviso nel silenzio. Giacobbe gridò:

“Mettiamoci il santo!”

E il busto fu posato su le tavole e tirato a forza di braccia nel guado. La processione di battaglia così attraversava il confine. Lungo le file correivano lampi metallici; le acque invase rompevano in sprazzi luminosi, e tutta una corrente rossa fiammeggiava fra i pioppetti, nel lontano, verso le torri quadrangolari. Mascálico si scorgeva su una piccola altura, in mezzo alli olivi, dormente. I cani abbaiano qua e là, con una furiosa persistenza di risposte. La colonna, uscita dal guado, abbandonando la via comune, avanzava a passi rapidi per una linea diretta che tagliava i campi. Il busto d'argento era portato di nuovo sulle spalle, dominava le teste delli uomini tra il grano altissimo, odorante e tutto stellante di lucciole vive.

D'improvviso, un pastore, che stava dentro un covile di paglia a guardare il grano, invaso da un pazzo sbigottimento in cospetto di tanta gente armata, si diede a fuggire su per la costa, strillando a squarciagola:

“Aiuto! aiuto!”

E li strilli echeggiavano nell'oliveto.

Allora fu che i Radusani fecero impeto. Fra i tronchi delli alberi, fra le canne secche, il santo di argento traballava, dava tintinni sonori

alli urti dei rami, s'illuminava di lampi vivissimi ad ogni accenno di precipizio. Dieci, dodici, venti schioppettate grandinarono in un balenío vibrante, una dopo l'altra su la massa delle case. Si udirono dei crepiti, poi delle grida; poi si udì un gran sommovimento clamoroso: alcune porte si aprirono, altre si chiusero; caddero dei vetri in frantumi, caddero dei vasi di basilico, spezzati su la via. Un fumo bianco si levava nell'aria placidamente, dietro la corsa delli assalitori, su per l'incandescenza celeste. Tutti, accecati, in una furia bestiale, gridavano:

“A morte! A morte!”

Un gruppo di fanatici si manteneva in torno a san Pantaleone. Vituperii atroci contro san Gonselvo irrompevano tra l'agitazione delle falci e delle ronche brandite.

“Ladro! Ladro! Pezzente! Le candele! Le candele!”

Altri gruppi prendevano d'assalto le porte delle case, a colpi d'accetta. E come le porte sgangherate e scheggiate cadevano, i Pantaleonidi saltavano nell'interno urlando, per uccidere. Femmine seminude si rifugiavano nelli angoli, implorando pietà; si difendevano dai colpi, afferrando le armi e tagliandosi le dita; rotolavano distese su 'l pavimento, in mezzo a mucchi di coperte e di lenzuoli da cui uscivano le loro flosce carni nutrite di rape.

Giacobbe alto, agile e rossastro come un canguro, duce della persecuzione, si arrestava ad ogni tratto per fare dei larghi gesti imperatorii sopra tutte le teste con una gran falce fienaia. Andava innanzi, impavido, senza più cappello, nel nome di san Pantaleone. Più di trenta uomini lo seguivano. E tutti avevano la sensazione confusa e ottusa di camminare in mezzo a un incendio, sopra un terreno oscillante, sotto una vòlta ardente che fosse per crollare.

Ma da ogni parte cominciarono ad accorrere i difensori, i Mascalicesi forti e neri come mulatti, sanguinari, che si battevano con lunghi coltelli a scatto, e tiravano al ventre e alla gola, accompagnando di voci gutturali il colpo. La mischia si ritraeva a poco a poco verso la chiesa; dai tetti di due o tre case già scoppiavano le fiamme; un'orda di femmine e di fanciulli fuggiva a precipizio tra li olivi, presa dal

pánico, senza più lume nelli occhi.

Allora tra i maschi, senza impedimento di lagrime e di lamenti, la lotta a corpo a corpo si strinse più feroce. Sotto il cielo color di ruggine, il terreno si copriva di cadaveri. Stridevano vituperii mozzati tra i denti dei colpiti; e continuo tra i clamori persisteva il grido dei Radusani:

“Le candele! Le candele!”

Ma la porta della chiesa restava sbarrata, enorme, tutta di quercia, stellante di chiodi. I Mascalicesi la difendevano contro li urti e contro le scuri. Il santo d'argento, impassibile e bianco, oscillava nel folto della mischia, ancora sostenuto su le spalle dei quattro ercoli che sanguinavano tutti dalla testa ai piedi, non volendo cadere. Ed era nel supremo voto delli assalitori mettere l'idolo su l'altare del nemico.

Ora mentre i Mascalicesi si battevano da leoni, prodigiosamente, su 'l gradino di pietra, Giacobbe disparve all'improvviso, girò il fianco dell'edifizio, cercando un varco non difeso per penetrare nel sacrario. E come vide un'apertura a poca altezza da terra, vi si arrampicò, vi rimase tenuto ai fianchi dall'angustia, vi si contorse, fin che non giunse a far passare il suo lungo corpo giù per lo spiraglio. Il cordiale aroma dell'incenso vaniva nella solitudine della casa di Dio. A tentoni nel buio, guidato dal fragore della pugna esterna, quell'uomo camminò verso la porta, inciampando nelle sedie, ferendosi alla faccia, alle mani. Rimbombava già il lavorio furioso delle accette radusane su la durezza della quercia, quando egli cominciò con un ferro a forzare le serrature, anelante, soffocato da una violenta palpitazione di ambascia che gli diminuiva la forza, con de' bagliori fatui nella vista, con le ferite che gli dovevano e gli mettevano un'onda tiepida giù per la cute.

“San Pantaleone! San Pantaleone!” gridarono di fuori le voci rauche de' suoi che sentivano cedere lentamente la porta, raddoppiando li urti e i colpi di scure. A traverso il legno giungeva lo schianto grave dei corpi che stramazavano, il colpo secco del coltello che inchiodava là qualcuno per le reni. E un gran sentimento, simile alla divina sollevazione d'animo d'un eroe che salvi la patria, ferveva allora in quel pitocco bestiale.

V.

Dopo un ultimo sforzo, la porta si aprì. I Radusani si precipitarono con un immenso urlo di vittoria, passando su i corpi delli uccisi, traendo il santo d'argento all'altare. E una viva oscillazione di riverberi invase d'un tratto l'oscurità della navata, fece brillare l'oro dei candelabri, le canne dell'organo, in alto. E in quel chiaror fulvo che or sì or no dall'incendio delle prossime case vibrava dentro, una seconda lotta si strinse. I corpi avviluppati rotolavano su i mattoni, non si distaccavano più, balzavano insieme qua e là nei divincolamenti della rabbia, urtavano e finivano sotto le panche, su i gradini delle cappelle, contro li spigoli dei confessionali. Nella concavità raccolta della casa di Dio, il suono agghiacciante del ferro che penetra nelle carni o che scivola su le ossa, quell'unico gemito rotto dell'uomo che è colpito in una parte vitale, quello scricchiolío che dà la cassa del cranio nell'infrangersi al colpo, il ruggito di chi non vuol morire, l'ilarità atroce di chi è giunto ad uccidere, tutto distintamente si ripercoteva. E un mite odore svanito d'incenso vagava su 'l conflitto.

L'idolo d'argento non anche aveva attinto la gloria dell'altare, poichè un cerchio ostile ne precludeva l'accesso. Giacobbe si batteva con la falce, ferito in più parti, senza cedere un palmo del gradino che primo aveva conquistato. Non rimanevano che due a sorreggere il santo: l'enorme testa bianca barcollava in un ondeggiamento grottesco di maschera ubriaca. I Mascalicesi imperversavano.

Allora san Pantaleone cadde su 'l pavimento, dando un tintinno vivo e vibrante. Come Giacobbe si slanciò per rialzarlo, un gran diavolo d'uomo con un colpo di ronca stese il nemico su la schiena. Due volte questi si rialzò, e altri due colpi lo rigettarono. Il sangue gl'inondava tutta la faccia e il petto e le mani; ma pure egli si ostinava a riavventarsi. Inviperiti da quella feroce tenacità di vita, tre, quattro, cinque bifolchi insieme gli diedero a furia nel ventre d'onde le viscere sgorgarono. Il fanatico cadde riverso, battè la nuca su 'l busto d'argento, si rivoltò d'un tratto bocconi con la faccia contro il metallo, con le braccia distese innanzi, con le gambe contratte. E san Pantaleone fu perduto.